the weekly
Standard
JANUARY 12, 1998 • $2.95

ON THE TITANIC
JOHN PODHORETZ

How Steven Pinker's Mind Works

The new science of evolutionary psychology and its bestselling guru

by Andrew Ferguson

The Military's Gender Wars
A.J. BACEVICH • JOHN HILLEN

Asia's Economic Crisis
LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY • DAVID SMICK

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THE POPE

(As Seen by Progressive Catholics)

The word "Pope" is related to the Latin *papa* (father). The Pope is the Holy *Father*, not Mother, not unisex Parent. He's the Vicar of Christ, and Christ revealed the *Father* in Heaven. Like Abraham, the Pope is — yes — a *Patriarch*.

Fatherhood matters, both in society and the Church, where we've been losing touch with something essential about reality, namely, the authority imaged in the male (Eph. 5:23). That authority is an icon of the Father in Heaven. The family has been falling apart, largely because husbands have become weak and irresponsible. The result of feminized or missing fathers is often kids who are confused, degenerate, or delinquent.

And the Church has been disintegrating because many bishops and priests have shrunk from being real fathers to their people, preferring instead to be indulgent mothers. As a result of this abdication of leadership, large sectors of the laity have become disoriented and, like lost sheep, have fallen for the shallow enticements of our decadent culture.

In our age of gender confusion, when authentic fatherhood is reviled, it's no wonder that progressive Catholics — those who yearn to be in step with the times — are embarrassed to have a Pope, a *Papa*. And when the Pope, like any good father, says *no* and stands by his word, they throw tantrums. But for the good of his beloved children's souls, the Pope, like his predecessors, says *no* to priestesses, goddesses, androgynous deities, suicide, hedonism, abortion, homosexuality, etc. The Church dealt those pagan forces a huge defeat long ago, but paganism is back with a vengeance. And the neopagan forces in the Church, especially the man-hating feminists and active homosexuals, are seeking to emasculate the Holy Father. To achieve that, they and their allies would "democratize" the Church. The Pope would become a figurehead, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Church would resemble the Episcopal Church, where just about anything goes morally and theologically but there's enough ritual to make it all seem right.

To the progressive Catholics who persist in caricaturing the Pope as a medieval Darth Vader ("Dark Father"), we say: Cease and desist, and get with the program!

To the namby-pamby "moderate" Catholics who say, "Let's have a dialogue about the divisive issues," we say: Appeasement doesn't work! It only encourages and legitimizes the saboteurs in the Church — as when Chamberlain had a friendly dialogue with the neopagan Hitler in Munich in 1938.

And to orthodox Catholics, we say: Hang in there! We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine in the service of the Catholic tradition, refuse to surrender the Faith or compromise it away. We're unafraid to be unfashionable, and we call a spade a spade. If you stand with us, or if you'd like to lean on us for encouragement or strength, subscribe today!

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The Audit Bureau Member

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The Gospel According to Gore

The Scrapbook is full of ecumenical spirit in this season of the Holiday That Dare Not Speak Its Name. This spirit infuses the days surrounding December 25, when politicians try to inject a bit of religion into their speeches, but not so much as to alarm the church/state ideologues at People for the American Way. It's a spirit that entails speaking as vaporously as possible about "the season" in general, while never actually naming Christ.

Both Al Gore and Hillary Rodham Clinton, for example, have agreed this year on the meaning of Christmas—it's about homelessness. The first lady's official holiday greeting began, "On this day, when we celebrate the birth of a homeless child who later became the Prince of Peace." The veep, at a Dec. 22 press conference with housing secretary Andrew Cuomo, allowed as how, "speaking from my own religious tradition in this Christmas season, 2,000 years ago a homeless woman gave birth to a homeless child in a manger because the inn was full."

Speaking from Al Gore's own religious tradition, as he styles it, it's certainly true that Mary and Joseph sought refuge in a Bethlehem stable. But that's because they were traveling. By all accounts, Joseph the carpenter provided perfectly well for his household, which was not homeless. The problem being that in those days, verily, you could not dial 1-800-THE-ROOF and ask them to hold your room past 6 p.m. What's more, as outraged readers of the *Washington Times* pointed out after that paper quoted Gore's statement, the Holy Family was traveling because Caesar Augustus wanted to conduct a census in order to levy taxes! (Now, if only the Romans had conducted their census by sampling instead of enumeration . . .)

The vice president's remarks contained more than his normal quota of unctuousness. He praised Tipper for giving "all the proceeds from her latest book to health care for the homeless. And in our round of Christmas receptions and parties," Gore continued breathlessly, "it's always a great thrill when she will slip up behind me and whisper in my ear that the person I just met used to be a homeless person." He said that he was reaching out to the homeless because "I feel called upon as part of my religious faith." And he quickly added: "Other religious traditions have very similar teachings, of course." It's amazing Gore's P.C. meter didn't lead him to add that other non-religious traditions also have such teachings. And what about various good-hearted anti-religious traditions?

The Scrapbook is reminded of the immortal effort of a previous vice president, George Bush, describing how he held himself together as he bobbed perilously in the waters of the Pacific following the crash of his bomber in World War II: "I thought about Mother and Dad and the strength I got from them—and God and faith . . ." And then quickly, lest anyone be offended, Bush added, "and the Separation of Church and State." Of course.

The *Times* Slurs Palestinians

For years, those who perceive a media bias against Israel have had a resounding complaint: The country is held to a double standard, expected to behave like a Boy Scout while its neighbors indulge in every sort of mayhem. Now this theory has extraordinary proof, straight from the mouth of the *New York Times*.

A supporter of CAMERA, the pro-Israel media-watchdog group, wrote to the paper of record last summer to protest the disparity between two articles by Serge Schmemann, the *Times*'s Middle East correspondent. The first was a front-page, 2,500-word indictment of Israel for the use of torture; the second was a far smaller, almost perfunctory report on a Palestinian human-rights group's finding of extensive torture in the Palestinian Authority.

The letter-writer contended that both stories were flawed and biased, but what else is new? The interesting part is the response he received from a *Times* news editor, William Borders, who wrote, "The whole point is that torture by Israel, a democratic ally of the United States, which gets huge support from this country, is news. Torture by Palestinians seems less surprising. Surely," he concluded, "you don't consider the two authorities morally equivalent."

Well, no. Israel has always held itself to a higher standard. But who knew that the *New York Times* shaped its reporting around a double standard that is so condescending to the Palestinians? And as the *CAMERA Media Report* notes, "This line of reasoning could justify failure to cover any human rights violations by regimes thought of as particularly brutal."

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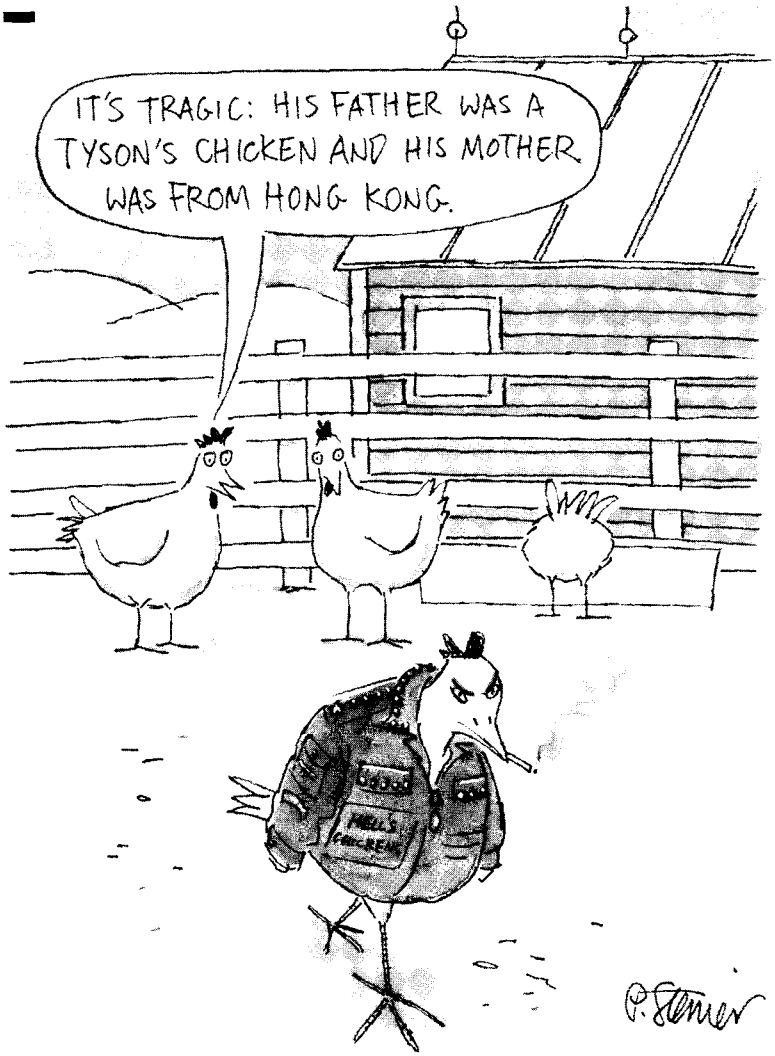

English for the Americans

The "English for the Children" initiative campaign led by maverick California Republican Ron K. Unz has received enough signatures on its petitions to gain a place on the ballot this June. Unz confidently predicts passage of the measure by California voters. "Reduced to a single sentence," says Unz, "our initiative would simply ensure that all the little immigrant children in California are sent to school and taught English so that they can become successful members of American society."

And not just immigrant children, apparently. In Oakland, as K.L. Billingsley reports in the *Washington Times*, a Mr. George Louie is now suing the school board for placing his 5-year-old son Travell in a class being conducted in Chinese. "I stayed in class 45 minutes and no English was spoken," Mr. Louie said.

The principal of Lincoln Elementary School, Wendy Lee, pointed a finger at the feds. She said that "90 percent of the students are Asian and 90 percent of those are Chinese. By a consent decree with the Office of Civil Rights [of the U.S. Department of Education], all my classes have to be bilingual." But in any case, Ms. Lee went on to insist, young Travell Louie "is being well served."

George Louie is not appeased. His son "says the Chinese kids are making fun of him in Chinese." And isn't learning anything. Mr. Louie is supporting "English for the Children."

Starbullies

Still in a festive mood, The Scrapbook notes that the Starbucks Coffee Co., which trademarked the name "Christmas Blend" for one of its javas in 1992, has sicced its lawyers on the Russian Orthodox monks of All-Merciful Saviour Monastery in Puget Sound, Wash., who also peddle a "Christmas Blend" coffee. Heiromonk Tryphon told the *Washington Times*, "I have a right to use 'Christmas.' They may think they have a right under the law, but they have no moral right."

Father Tryphon may want to seek solace and advice from the administrators at Calvin College, a Christian Reformed (i.e., Calvinist) school in Michigan. A few years back, they tried to trademark the name of their school for use on student sweatshirts and the like. The only problem was lawyers from Calvin Klein, who objected to anyone else selling clothing with the name Calvin on it. Calvin College won of course, as it was predestined to. And so will the monks, though perhaps not by faith alone.

Avalon Calling

In further news from the religious-ignorance front, *Washingtonian* magazine documented a "spiritual awakening" it detects in the land. Its holiday roundup included testimony from orthodox believers as well as angel channelers, hypnotherapists, shamans, and swamis. It was a fine idea—marred in the second line of the article when the chairman of the theology department at Catholic University of America was made to cite "one of our great saints, Teresa of Avalon."

Why no mention of the great French martyr Jonah Varc?

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Beam Me Up

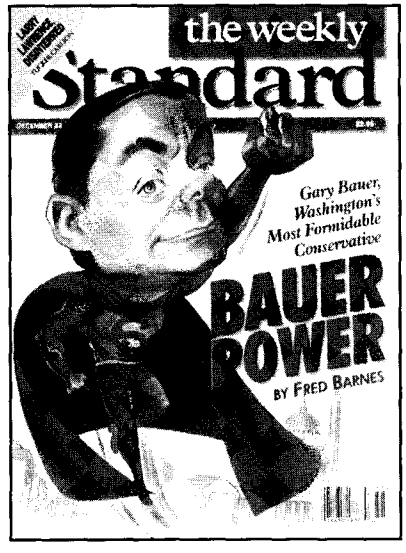
For the last year, The Weekly Standard has been criticizing my relationship with Min. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, although no reporter has ever called to ask me about my intentions. I've felt your jibes and pokes to be well within the bounds of fair comment and criticism, though, as anyone venturing to associate with a man who is widely assumed to be anti-Semitic has to expect. Other journals of opinion that have been more curious have interviewed me and at least have concluded that my objectives are reasonable.

You have now gone beyond the bounds of fairness (Scrapbook, Dec. 22), taking words you have found on my Web site (www.polyconomics.com) and completely twisting them into a meaning you surely know I did not intend. The effect leaves the impression that I believe Jews have sailed through history as a privileged class. No less an authority than Dorothy Rabinowitz, media critic of the *Wall Street Journal*, called to inform me about the item and to tell me it would cause me great damage. Here is the relevant section of my discussion, which followed a question from a Jewish man on my view as a political economist of the role of Jews in history:

"Jews are different than non-Jews. What sets them apart from the rest of civilization is the culture that resists intermarriage with non-Jews. Those who have drifted into intermarriage over the last three millennia are now part of the rest of civilization, and one supposes that we, at least in the west, all have some 'Jewish blood.' But if God in fact 'chose' Jews to set themselves apart in this fashion, it was done with a divine purpose. While the population of the world has gone to 6 billion, with Jews now only a tiny fraction at 13 million, that small number is the most powerful and educated and talented, pound for pound, than any other group. With all the terrible things that civilization has endured for these millennia, Jews have traveled through as if on their own private spaceship.

"I submit that if this had not been the case, we might not have gotten where we are, but might still be back in the age of the barbarians. If Jews had intermarried in all these years, they all would have disappeared as a culture. In that light, I regard Jewish culture and history as a primary blessing of the one God we all worship. Louis Farrakhan, I assure you, feels exactly as I do. And just as you decry the dissolution of Judaism at the hands of those who would call themselves Jews and still reject the laws of Abraham and Moses, so does Farrakhan decry those Muslims and Christians who have lost their way."

As a number of your editors know me as a political and economic theorist, who has experience in developing a new historiography, I believe it is inexcusable that you would take the above comments and make me appear to others as anti-Semitic and perhaps



deranged. As I explained to Ms. Rabinowitz, both Min. Farrakhan and I use the "spaceship" term as a metaphor that places humans closer to God in heaven. It is a parallel to Noah's Ark in Jewish Scripture, inspired far in advance of space travel. If your editors or reporters had taken the trouble to call, I could have given these explanations, but you seem determined to write what you please.

Jude Wanniski
Morristown, NJ

You Can Look It Up

In her letter, Elizabeth Birch of the Human Rights Campaign Fund ("Special Correspondence," Dec. 15) said that our study of the homosexual lifespan was "widely discredited" and "one of the most bogus statistics in the anti-gay arsenal of religious political extremists." But name-calling hardly renders our findings "discredited" or "bogus." In science, there is an accepted way to discredit a study—in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Our findings have "been on the scientific table" for better than three years and a refutation of our findings has yet to appear.

Birch said "Cameron's so-called study of the life expectancy of gay people was based completely on obituaries placed in gay community publications." Our "so-called study" was published in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Omega* in 1994 and thus meets customary scientific and federal-court standards for evidence. However, our study was not based "completely on obituaries." First, we systematically assembled 6,737 obituaries from 18 homosexual papers across the United States. We discovered that, irrespective of location and whether due to AIDS or something else, the median age of death for gays was in the early-40s and for lesbians the mid-40s. Compared to statistics for men and women reported by the Census Bureau, very few homosexuals survived to old age (i.e., to age 65+). We also reviewed the forensic and scientific literature about homosexuals from 1858 to 1993 and documented something that apparently no one else had noticed: Just about every sample of homosexuals reported an age distribution in harmony with our obituary findings. That is, irrespective of country, whether assembled for a criminal, medical, psychiatric, or sociological purpose, samples of homosexuals were disproportionately young and had few individuals aged 65 or older.

Since the publication of our findings, two large random surveys of sexuality have appeared—and both reported results consonant with ours. The University of Chicago "definitive" sex survey of Americans reported that 2.9 percent of men aged 18-29 claimed that they were bisexual or homosexual. For those aged 30-39, 4.2 percent made the same claim. But for those aged 40-49, the proportion declined to 2.2 percent, and for those 50-59 it declined to 0.5 percent. The corresponding proportions for women were 1.6 percent, 1.8 percent, 1.3 percent, and 0.4 percent. A

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British survey found that, overall, 1.5 percent of the men and 0.7 percent of the women reported homosexual sex in the past five years. But the proportion of those aged 45-59 who made this claim was only 0.9 percent for the men and 0.1 percent for the women.

The age distributions of the married and homosexually-partnered in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway offer another test. In each of these countries, the median age of the married is about 50 and about a quarter of the married are old. But among the legally partnered gays and lesbians, the median age is about 40 and fewer than 5 percent are aged 65 or above.

Why did two nationwide sex surveys find so few old homosexuals? Why do partnered homosexuals trace such a young age distribution? The answer to both questions seems to be, because not very many of them become old.

Birch claimed that I have been "censured by and/or kicked out of" various professional organizations. I submit that these associations don't tell the truth about homosexuality, and I have proved it in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. These liberal associations dislike what I say and have censured me. But if they had a serious case against my scientific efforts, they would do as I have done—publish that case in peer-reviewed journals.

They haven't.

PAUL CAMERON
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

WAVING THE WAND

Nicholas Eberstadt's description of the religious zeal that exudes from the devotees of the "secular superstition" that animates the Kyoto treaty ("The Magicians of Kyoto," Dec. 22) brought to mind a passage from a U.N. document designed to explain the climate-change treaty to the uninitiated. The pamphlet, entitled "Understanding Climate Change: A Beginner's Guide to the UN Framework Convention," is available on the Web site of the United Nations Environment Programme. It acknowledges forthrightly that "there is currently no scientific certainty about what a dangerous level [of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere] would be. Scientists believe it will take about another decade . . . before today's uncertainties (or many of them) are significantly reduced."

But the pamphlet goes on to state, triumphantly, that "the treaty promotes action in spite of uncertainty." The tone is such that one almost expects this passage to be followed by the words, "We walk by faith and not by sight." Clearly, the authors of the pamphlet want us, as Eberstadt put it, to "clap our hands and believe" that they are courageous in their desire to impose huge costs on their fellow human beings in spite of the enormous uncertainty of the enterprise.

STAN WATSON
BIRMINGHAM, AL

IT TAKES TWO

Ever since the end of the Gulf War, there has been a disturbing tendency on the part of some in both the Army and the Air Force to denigrate the other and to intimate that each service is capable of achieving significant results on its own. Frederick W. Kagan's recent article ("Not by Air Alone," Dec. 1), with its categorical assertion that ground forces deal in certainties while air formations deal in uncertainties, is a reflection of the Army's part of that argument.

Kagan has apparently lost sight of Clausewitz's observation that "many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain." In truth, both ground and air forces deal in uncertainties. The good news is that the capabilities of one help to cancel out the uncertainties of the other. From their elevated position, air platforms can provide timely information as to enemy locations and dispositions that ground forces lack. And while Kagan rightly points out that ground forces can provide details of tactical engagements that are unavailable to airmen, the larger point is that the synthesis of both capabilities is essential to success in modern war.

Taking the evidence of the Gulf War as a starting point, it is time for both the Army and the Air Force to attempt to develop a joint, as opposed to a parochial, view of the conflict. Each service seems to be at least mildly plagued with "victory disease," which is the military equivalent of mad cow disease but even more fatal. Curing this malady will require Army advocates to acknowledge that the air operations that began on Jan. 17, 1991, contributed substantially to the coalition's victory by making the Iraqi air force a non-player in the war and significantly degrading the effectiveness of the Iraqi army. The cure will also require airmen to admit that despite this degradation, the strategic situation in late February demanded a sudden and catastrophic, rather than prolonged and incremental, defeat of the Iraqi army and that a number of Iraqi ground formations, particularly the Republican Guards divisions, retained a noteworthy combat capability that was neutralized only by joint action between the Army and the Air Force.

But the main point is not about the past. It is about the present and the future. Although the United States is presently basking in a relatively low-threat environment, this condition will not obtain indefinitely. When it no longer does, the Republic will require both separate service competencies and a joint national defense capability that effectively resolves the difficult issues of air-ground operations facing today's armed forces. The particulars of this capacity may, in part, be legislated by Congress and imposed by the DOD and JCS. Such external pressure, while useful and perhaps even necessary, cannot compensate for lack of goodwill between the services. We must work now to meet the demands of a potentially dangerous future. Such labor demands that the senior leaders in both the Army and the Air Force rein in their go-it-alone zealots and begin to rebuild the bridges that are required to provide for the *common* defense.

HAROLD R. WINTON
MAXWELL AFB, AL

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Casual

Klutzes and Other Close Readers

I have long considered myself a minor connoisseur of the titles of books. Some titles seem so perfectly right, others so wrong as to kill the books before they leave the print shop. What if Flaubert, for example, had given his novel *Madame Bovary* the title *Emma*, and Jane Austen had decided to give the title *Miss Woodhouse* to her novel *Emma*? Both, I hope you will agree, would seem less—rather a lot less, actually.

A number of years ago, back in the martini age, a group of New York editors, after their third round, is supposed to have discussed what they thought were sure winning and sure losing book titles. The sure winner, as I recall, was *Lincoln's Mother's Doctor's Dog*; it contained all the subjects that make for a bestseller: Lincoln, mothers, doctors, and pets. Whether such a book would sell well, of course, there is no certain way of knowing. But the editors' choice of the worst possible title seems to me right on the money. It was *Canada: Sleeping Giant to the North*. Imagine receiving that little volume on your birthday. One can hear the gentle sound of snoring before the book is unwrapped.

A good title—a title that has a chance to sell really well—is one that stays in the mind and comes tripping off the lips at the bookstore. *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *In Cold Blood*—all now seem not only unforgettable but spot-on right. *War and Peace* isn't bad, either; nor is *Ulysses*, as one-word titles go. *Remembrance of Things Past*, I read somewhere, in a new English translation now in the works, is about to get changed to the more literal *In Search of Lost Time*. I myself prefer *Remembrance of Things Past*, which comes from Shakespeare (Sonnet 30) and with which I have lived for so long.

You don't want a title of which people can make fun. My friend Marion Magid, who was for a brief time married to the essayist Edward Hoagland, told me that she once went into the old Scribner's bookstore on Fifth Avenue to check on her then-husband's newest book. "Excuse me," she said to the clerk, "but do you have *The Courage of Turtles*?" "Lady," she reported the clerk replying, "I ain't got the strength of a rabbit." A good title oughtn't allow you to talk back to it. At an academic bookshop I used to frequent, the philosophy table contained a book entitled *Clarity Is Not Enough*. I could never pass it without muttering, "Ah, but it's a start."

I have tried a number of title gambits in my own writing. I took half a title from Tocqueville and called one of my books *Divorced in America*. In *Ambition*, I gave a one-word title a shot. I have attempted clever titles (*The Middle of My Tether*), alliterative ones (*Plausible Prejudices*, *Partial Payments*, *Pertinent Players*), and derivative ones (*With My Trousers Rolled*). None, I am saddened to have to report, has freed me from the financial wars. As a result, I have come to the dreary and unoriginal conclusion that a bestselling title is nothing more than the title given to a book that happens to sell extremely well.

At the moment what concerns me is what I take to be a striking lowering of the common denominator of intelligence in book titling. The phenomenon began, I believe, with the Klutz books, most notably *Juggling for the Complete Klutz*, which came with three soft, block-shaped balls and an elementary instruction manual. Other Klutz books followed: *The Klutz Book of Magic*, *The Klutz Book of Knots*, *The Klutz Book of Marbles*, *The Klutz Handbook: A Testimonial to Human Nature*, the only interesting title in the series.

The success of the Klutz books led nicely to the Dummies books, the comprehensiveness of whose titles seems perhaps a little wider than human ignorance itself: *Windows for Dummies*, *Accounting for Dummies*, *Auto Repair for Dummies*, *Beer for Dummies*, then—stepping it up a good bit—*Bach for Dummies*, *Gregorian Chant for Dummies*, and *College Planning for Dummies*. I myself bought *The Internet for Dummies*, which I didn't find all that helpful. But then, as Barnum said, guys like me are born every minute.

From Klutzes and Dummies, I now see that we have moved on to Idiots. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Entertaining* is the title of a new book in this, the line of lowered expectations. Others in the Idiot's Guide series are in the works, the back of the book on entertaining instructs. Can books for morons, imbeciles, maniacs, and simple damn fools be far behind? Arrayed on the shelves of the charming Dumbed Down Bookshop nearest you one can see the new titles now: *Philosophy for the Dim-witted*, *Sex for the Psychopath*, *The Bozo's Handbook of Do-It-Yourself Major Surgery*.

A funny country, one that can produce such nutty and superfluous books. What do you suppose their existence says about the state of our culture? Gone with the wind, you might say, if a woman named Mitchell from Atlanta hadn't had the savvy to say it first.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

WHERE'S THE OUTRAGE?

As the era of Clintonized expectations crawls into its sixth year, huge numbers of Americans have long since forgotten to be upset that their elected government conducts itself like a used-car dealership. So bored is the mass opinionocracy with the Clinton administration's compulsive disingenuousness, in fact, that it is now widely considered poor form to call the habit by its rightful name: lying. And anyone who makes this mistake too loudly is almost instantly written off as a hysteric.

Which is exactly what's happened to Judge Royce C. Lamberth of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.

On December 18 in Washington, Judge Lamberth determined that the White House and the Justice Department had systematically deceived his court while defending Hillary Clinton's 1993 health-care task force against a lawsuit. As sanction for this deception, Lamberth ordered the government to reimburse the lead plaintiffs in the case for nearly $300,000 in attorney's fees. This sort of result is exceedingly rare; the United States enjoys sovereign immunity from financial penalty whenever it litigates, as it usually has, "in good faith." But here, the judge decided, the government's faith had fallen rather short of "good"—all the way down, in fact, to "reprehensible" and "shocking."

JUDGE LAMBERTH SEEMS TO HAVE VIOLATED AN UNSPOKEN TABOO AGAINST BLUNT CRITICISM OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S VERACITY PROBLEM.

In the early spring of 1993, as Mrs. Clinton's health-care task force was getting underway, its spokesmen liked to brag that hundreds of experts from all walks of American life were actively involved, advising and deciding things. It was supposed to be "the most open policymaking process in history." But it was open by invitation only. The task force's 12 "cluster groups" and 38 "subgroups," which actually wrote what became the Clinton health-care bill, were meeting in strictest secrecy. And they were doing so in seeming violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, or "FACA." Under this law, any working group on assignment to the president must convene its meetings in public unless all its members are full-time federal employees.

So the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons and two other interested parties brought suit against the government before Judge Lamberth. Lamberth was asked to block further work by the cluster groups and subgroups pending a review of their records to determine whether they were covered by FACA. This he refused to do, accepting instead the accuracy of a sworn declaration, signed by top Clinton health-policy aide Ira Magaziner under penalty of perjury, and formally submitted to the judge by the Justice Department on March 3, 1993. That declaration read, in relevant part: "Only federal government employees serve as members of the interdepartmental working group." Development of the Clinton health-care plan, in other words, was exempt from FACA. And it proceeded in secret.

To make a long story short, this initial District Court decision was eventually reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals. The case was sent back to Judge Lamberth's chambers for subsequent litigation. And that litigation continued, unresolved, fought by the government with arguments Lamberth would later call "preposterous," for more than a year. The case was not finally declared moot until December 1994, when the Clinton health-care plan was dead politically.

But by then, an exhaustive documentary record of that plan had already been pried loose from the White House and Justice Department, piece by piece. And those papers made clear what had always seemed obvious. The "cluster groups" and "subgroups" had met illegally: Most had lots of private citizens as members; some of them had no federal employees at

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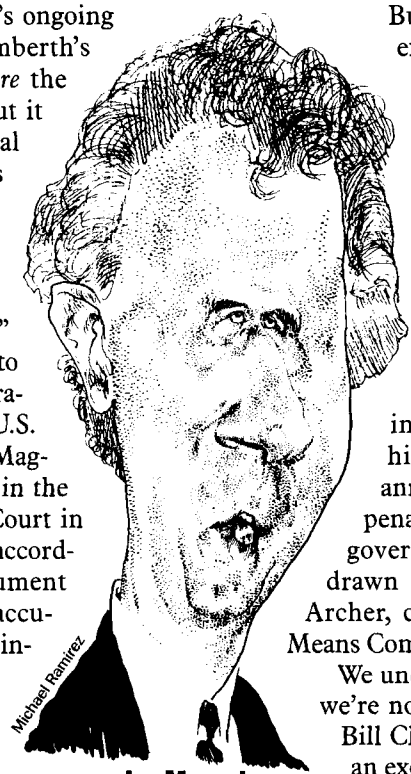
all. In short, the "Magaziner declaration" to Judge Lamberth—never explicitly corrected by the administration—was a falsehood.

This falsehood was the principal basis for Lamberth's finding, last month, that the entire lawsuit had been defended in bad faith, and that the defendants were therefore subject to financial sanction. "The Executive Branch of the government, working in tandem, was dishonest with this court," the judge wrote, "and the government must now face the consequences of its misconduct."

It all seems straightforward enough. But it seems also to have violated an unspoken taboo against blunt criticism of the Clinton administration's ongoing veracity problem. Five days after Lamberth's opinion was issued, and five days *before* the White House had anything to say about it in public, the *Washington Post* editorial page weighed in as guardian of the city's rhetorical etiquette and slapped the judge around pretty hard. It might be okay to say, the paper acknowledged, that the Magaziner declaration was "tricky" and even "highly misleading." But it was really excessive of Lamberth to call Magaziner's signature on this declaration "dishonest." In 1995, after all, the U.S. attorney's office declined to prosecute Magaziner for perjury or contempt of court in the matter, and it so advised the District Court in an 18-page memorandum. Lamberth, according to the *Post*, has quoted this document "selectively" and characterized it "inaccurately," effectively slandering Ira Magaziner in the process.



Ira Magaziner

It's hard to follow the logic of this complaint, which turns on a gnostic distinction between "tricky" and "misleading" on the one hand, and "dishonest" on the other. It's harder still to square the *Post* editorial with the actual facts of the case. The 1995 U.S. attorney's memorandum concluded that the Magaziner declaration was deliberately drafted to convey a commonsense impression: that "only federal government employees serve as members of the interdepartmental working group." The 1995 memo also concluded that this impression was a mirage—that the declaration's key words, "employees" and "members," were merely a lawyerly artifice, wholly without fixed meaning. In a funny, *echt*-Clintonian sense, that is, the Magaziner declaration was too dishonest to be proved criminally dishonest. This judgment hardly "exonerated" Magaziner, as the *Post* editorialists would have it.

But the paper's criticism of Royce Lamberth stands—unrebutted, so far as we are aware, by any major columnist or talking head or editorial page anywhere in the country. The White House has been pleased to second that criticism. Ira Magaziner parades around as a victim, claiming to be "outraged by the judge's irresponsible action." The president of the United States, no less, has called Lamberth's opinion "unfair and unsupported by the facts." For attempting to reimpose traditional standards of integrity on the federal government—and for doing so pointedly and visibly—a sitting judge has had his own integrity challenged. The world is turned on its head.

But what's new about any of this, exactly, and who is ultimately responsible for creating a Washington ethos so intolerant of justified moral outrage? Ira Magaziner's bleatings to the contrary, Royce Lamberth did not issue an individual sanction in the health-care lawsuit. He sanctioned the government as a whole, because the evidence indicated that the Clinton administration, "at the highest levels," was broadly and knowingly complicit in the deception of his court. The White House has announced that it intends to pay this penalty from general, taxpayer derived government funds. This prospect has drawn an angry reaction from Rep. Bill Archer, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

We understand why Archer is peeved. But we're not quite convinced he's right to be. Bill Clinton is a dishonest man who runs an executive branch rivaled in history for dishonesty only by Richard Nixon's. Such dishonesty costs money. American taxpayers have already spent tens of millions of dollars on inconclusive independent-counsel investigations and congressional oversight hearings the nub of which has always been the administration's instinct for lying. They spent this money in Clinton's first term. They had every reason to believe they would be forced to continue spending it if they returned him to office for a second term. And they did so anyway.

In their collective, electoral wisdom, in other words, Americans have decided to pay the fine rather than be brutally confronted with the nature of their chosen leaders. In the grand scheme of things, another $300,000 will be just a drop in the bucket. And in some sense, too, it will serve the country right.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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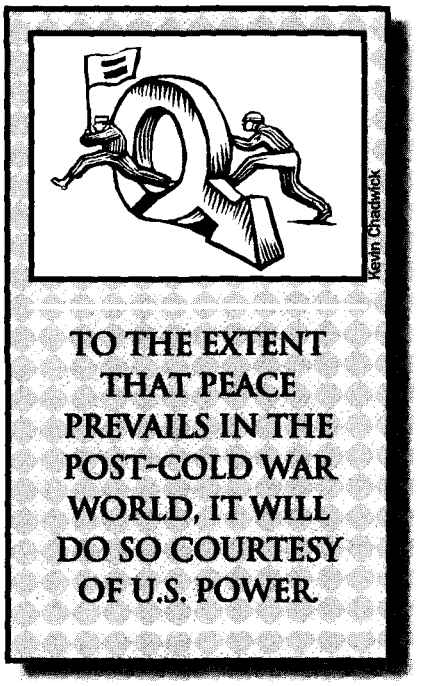
GENDER WARS AND REAL WARS

by A. J. Bacevich

THE HEADLONG RUSH TO BEND the American military to the dictates of gender politics has slowed for the moment. This welcome break is owed to the year-end report of a federal advisory panel chaired by former senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker. The panel, created in response to egregious sexual-harassment scandals at Army training bases, concluded that it makes no sense to mix young men and women in basic training as is presently the practice in all of the services, the Marine Corps excepted. The result of such gender integration has been "less discipline, less unit cohesion, and more distraction from training programs." The Kassebaum Baker report thus provides political cover to permit the Army, Navy, and Air Force to reconsider—and revitalize—their approach to training recruits.

More broadly, the committee's findings lend credence to the notion that the combustible mixing of young men and women can complicate efforts to create effective military organizations—an insight self-evident to common folk, but rank heresy to political and academic sophisticates who insist that gender is simply a "construct." On that score, conservatives are right to endorse the report. But in crucial respects, there is less to the Kassebaum Baker report than meets the eye.



Indeed, however commendable its core findings, the report, read in its entirety, serves primarily to underscore the impoverished state of public discourse on issues related to national security. Given a political class fairly obsessed with redressing female grievances, real or imagined, the American defense establishment can hardly ignore the subject. Indeed, irksome though it may be, negotiating an accommodation between military necessity and the vagaries of politics, however harebrained, is a democratic imperative. Yet any thoughtful consideration of what the committee calls "our gender-integrated all-volunteer force" ought to occur in a context broader than that of domestic politics. Two elements in particular should frame the discussion: U.S. strategy in the aftermath of the Cold War and the character of modern warfare. On these matters, the Kassebaum Baker panel is silent.

To be sure, the committee report acknowledges the need for military forces that are "disciplined, effective, and ready"—but it offers no specifics about what those forces are expected to do. It notes that the United States is "redefining its threats" and that the services are "revising their missions," but gives nary a hint as to what those threats and missions might be. It credits technology with "changing how and when America defends its interests," but does not comment on the operational implications of such developments. Most strikingly, the report avoids altogether any mention of violence or battle or war.

The point is not that an advisory committee on "Gender-Integrated Training" should assign itself responsibility for defining strategic priorities or articulating a vision of future warfare. Rather, it is that the cramped perspective and antiseptic language of the Kassebaum Baker report illustrate the reigning American preference for averting our eyes from the nastier things that the armed forces will actually be called on to do.

The insistent protestations of politicians to the contrary notwithstanding, the United States today has shouldered the responsibilities of a global hegemon. To the extent that some approximation of peace prevails in the post-Cold War world, it will do so courtesy of American power—at least such is the predominant view within the foreign-policy establishment. The rules defining that order will, it goes without saying, largely reflect the values and preferences of the United States.

Yet the Pax Americana will not be self-regulating. Turmoil and instability will embroil some parts of the world. In others, malcontents motivated by either perversity or principle will defy the rules. The chief function of the American military will be to quell disorder and discipline the mischievous.

For these purposes, a quick surgical strike or a brief intervention employing limited force might often suffice. If the past is any indicator, however, occasions will almost certainly arise that see American forces engaging in large-scale warfare against a formi-

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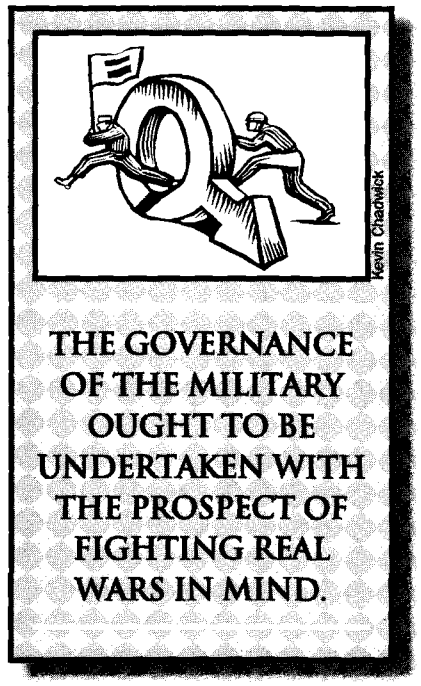
dable adversary. In the century now about to conclude, the United States found it necessary to do just that on five separate occasions, mobilizing its young men for great crusades on distant shores. All but one of those conflicts resulted in gut-wrenching combat, horrifying devastation, and painfully heavy losses.

The Gulf War is the apparent exception, supposedly pointing toward a new paradigm of armed conflict that Americans are uniquely well suited to dominate. The allure of this paradigm is that it seems to offer a painless way to translate American military power into continuing American political dominance. The United States not only defeats its adversary but does so in such a way that the sacrifice, devastation, and disconcerting social consequences that have been the historic byproducts of warfare shrink to insignificance. Indeed, it is this very prospect that has boosted the claims of those eager to remove barriers limiting the roles of military women. Push-button wars render the hyper-masculine warrior ethos obsolete. At least so it appeared in the jubilant aftermath of Desert Storm.



Yet it has become increasingly clear that the exception proves the rule. Saddam Hussein survives, taunting the United States with the knowledge that success in 1991 came cheaply in part because it was incomplete: The Bush administration balked at paying the price that a genuinely decisive victory would entail.

Getting rid of Saddam once and for all is likely to require that the United States (with minimal allied assistance) renew its assault on Iraq, driving on Baghdad to secure an outcome to the war more to our liking. Little evidence exists to suggest that Americans have any more stomach for such an enterprise now than they did in 1991. But Saddam *is* precisely the sort of malcontent that an effective hegemon cannot afford to tolerate. A second Gulf War fought to the finish *is* precisely the type of conflict that U.S. forces must be prepared to fight and win. The governance of the American military—including questions about the relationship between gender and the capacity of a combat force to sustain fighting power and of a nation to withstand the burdens of war—ought to be undertaken with the prospect of just such wars in mind. In that regard, the Kassebaum Baker committee comes up well short of the mark.

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THE MILITARY CULTURE WARS

by John Hillen

FEMINISTS HAVE LATELY SUFFERED two tactical setbacks, but they are still winning their war on the military. A federal commission headed by former senator Nancy Kassebaum Baker, despite the requisite presence of feminists and quota-meisters, has surprised everybody by unanimously recommending that all the services segregate the living quarters and much of the training undertaken by men and women joining the armed forces. More important, the report castigates the services for making basic training so soft that it is often indistinguishable from freshman orientation at our most politically correct universities. And the Kassebaum Baker report follows on the heels of the stormy resignation of assistant secretary of the Army Sara Lister, who had publicly assailed the Marine Corps as "extremists." The corps has stoutly resisted the feminist agenda pushed by Clinton appointees like Lister and is the only service that maintains a degree of separation between men and women in its boot camp. Somebody must have forgotten to tell them that, in the words of one Democratic activist, the president ran on the promise "to make the military equal for everybody."

Despite these setbacks, feminists are still very much in control of the debate. Ultimately, they maintain, the issue is one of group rights. Women-in-com-

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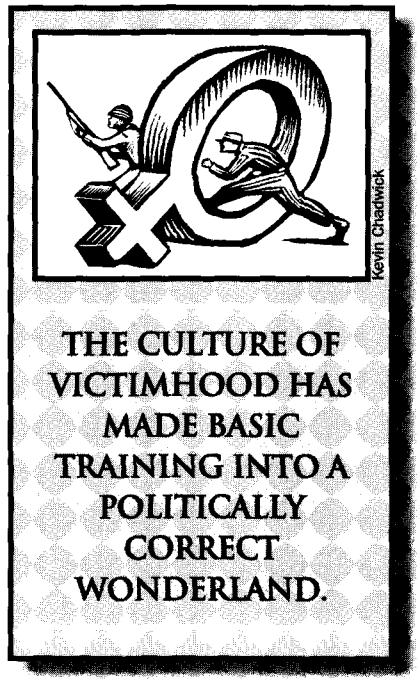
bat is merely a logical extension of women-out-of-the-home-and-into-the-workplace, right? Any effort to slow down this movement is an attempt to "turn back the clock." Feckless politicians, including experienced Republicans whose own investigations turned up the same evidence as the Kassebaum Baker commission, cringe at the accusation that they are against progress or, worse still, that they are widening the gender gap.

Even more depressing is the tacit acceptance of these terms of battle by most military leaders. What to think of the Army, Navy, and Air Force chiefs' passionate defense of the status quo only months before the 11 members of the Kassebaum Baker panel released their embarrassing findings? An absurdly small number of enlisted women—single digit percentages in several different studies—show any interest at all in joining combat units. Nonetheless, the Department of Defense has bent over backwards to show that the rights it is most concerned with are not those of the institution, with its grave and hazardous duties, but the rights of individuals and groups bringing a narcissistic and opportunistic culture of victimhood to the gates of boot camp and thence into the force.



The most notorious example is the politically correct wonderland that now passes for basic training. The new gender-integrated boot camp has become such a national joke that *Time* magazine's cover story on the softness of training was featured in its year-end Christmas commercial aiming for new subscribers. As a solemn voiceover describes the more outrageous features of the new basic training, a camera lingers over a young recruit being shorn in a military barber's chair, finally focusing on the lollipop in his hand. When the distinctively non-military-oriented masthead at *Time* figures it can cause outrage among the middle class over the softness of boot camp, a day of reckoning has arrived.

The American military, it should be clear by now, is suffering from something more severe than a belated battle of the sexes. It is, rather, undergoing an identity crisis. In the absence of a threat that would focus the strategic mind of the force, and under pressure from a counterculture all grown up and gone to work in Washington, the military is floundering about, trying to figure out to what extent it may need to change its culture to stay in sync with the society it serves. In *Making the Corps*, his recent book about the training of Marines, Tom Ricks worries that the Marine Corps and other elements of the military may become openly contemptuous of a society that turns up its nose at duty, honor, country, commitment, courage, and integrity. Ricks intimates that society may want to readopt some Marine Corps values. Sara Lister strongly suggested that the reverse take place.

For the most part, the Pentagon is with Lister. Not to put too fine a point on it, the military (with the once again conspicuous exception of the Marine Corps) is failing to defend its own culture and its own hierarchy of values. And, if recent history is any guide, we shouldn't be surprised. While courageous in battle, U.S. military leaders since World War II have generally been overly apologetic and eagerly compromising when it comes to issues of culture. When uniformed leaders do make a stand against some fashionable assault on military culture (such as Colin Powell vs. President Clinton over open homosexuality in the ranks) they are usually set upon by a coterie of academics screaming about a coup that is just around the corner. But such stands are the exception rather than the rule.

At the end of World War II, for the first time in American history, the military was faced with the need to maintain a large peacetime force through conscription. It convened a board headed by war hero Jimmy Doolittle and tasked it with figuring out how the military might change to make itself more amenable to peacetime draftees. As historian T. R. Fehrenbach wrote in his classic *This Kind of War*, "In 1945, somehow confusing the plumbers with the men who pulled the chain, the public demanded that the Army be changed to conform with decent, liberal society." The result was a series of reforms that softened military discipline and training. The changes did not appear to have detrimental effects on the U.S. forces occupying Japan and Europe, and, as Fehrenbach noted, "the troops looked good. Their appearance made the generals smile. What they lacked couldn't be seen, not until the guns sounded."

The guns did sound in 1950, and the battlefield performance of many American troops during the first months of the Korean War was shameful. GIs running panicked from the field of battle were not

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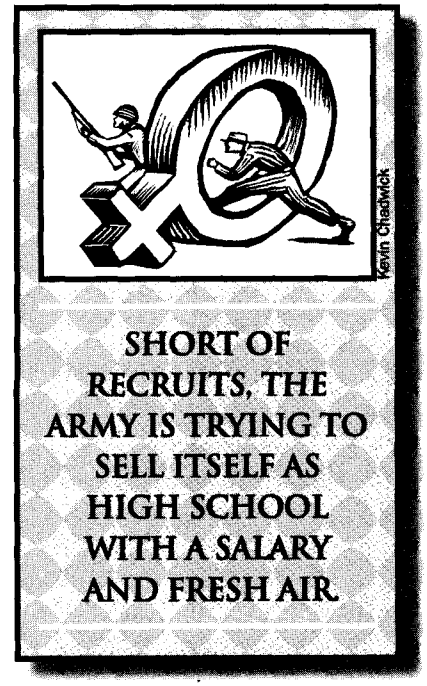
only underequipped in tanks and ammunition, but underequipped in the martial spirit and ethos that sustain a military force through the unnatural stresses of war. Many blamed the Doolittle reforms. In the aftermath of the disaster, Fehrenbach angrily wrote that "liberal society, in its heart, wants not only domination of the military, but acquiescence of the military toward the liberal view of life. But acquiescence society may not have, if it wants an army worth a damn. By the very nature of its mission, the military must maintain a hard and illiberal view of life and the world. Society's purpose is to live; the military's is to stand ready, if need be, to die." Trying to explain why men such as Doolittle, Eisenhower, and Marshall "rationalized," Fehrenbach concluded that they were overly taken with maintaining their own popularity and the military's change in status from long-serving and anonymous frontier servant to the premier heroic institution in the country.



The military appeared to take the lessons of Korea to heart until the end of the Vietnam War, when Richard Nixon ended the draft and started the all-volunteer force. The military was now faced with an even more imposing dilemma than that at the end of World War II: How to recruit volunteers from a society whose cultural icons were busy dedicating Academy Awards to the North Vietnamese? The answer was in the recruiting slogan of the new all-volunteer Army, "Today's Army Wants to Join YOU." The military, of its own volition, was going to make itself look enough like the drug-plagued, race-troubled, "question-authority!" society at large to attract volunteers. President Carter offered amnesty for draft dodgers and deserters, the American Federation of Government Employees pushed for the unionization of the military, and the services themselves relaxed the rigid social construct and military ethos that evolved over four thousand years of human history in response to the needs of men in battle. "Enlisted Councils" undermined the critical role of sergeants and, as one army publication wrote, "to many the all volunteer army meant beer in the barracks, long hair, loss of authority by non-commissioned officers, and drugs."

A few voices sounded the alarm—Army General Walter "Dutch" Kerwin wrote that "the values necessary to defend the society are often at odds with the values of the society itself. To be an effective servant of the people, the Army must concentrate not on the values of our liberal society, but on the hard values of the battlefield." His advice went unheeded. Needless to say, the malaise of the Carter years not only penetrated the U.S. military, but many say defined it. As Colin Powell and many others later noted, the most corrosive element of the Carter years in the military was the hollowness of spirit, not the low budgets. The Reagan administration not only increased defense spending, but began a concerted effort to reintroduce the warrior culture into the armed forces. The Army dropped its slogan of accommodation and replaced it with one of challenge—"Be All that You Can Be." In a few short years, and for the first time in history, the United States had the best military fighting force in the world.

Today we appear to have come full circle. The great majority of the military, facing recruiting and retention problems, is now trying to look less distinctive, more like civilian society. Clintonites are pressing the military to conform to the values of the baby boomers and their Generation X progeny rather than the other way around. The Army, for instance, is trying every desperate tactic to sell itself to an uninterested public. In an effort to stem its most serious recruiting problem since the end of the draft, the Army has tried to sell itself with what military sociologists call occupational attributes: money, training, job security—high school with a salary and fresh air. An Army recruiter was recently quoted in *USA Today* as trying to guess "what the twentysomethings are going to go for." The approach appears to be backfiring—recruiting is getting harder and the service is steadily lowing standards to accommodate recruits who would have been turned away only five years ago. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Hispanic recruits are flocking to the Marine Corps because the Army no longer satisfies their standards of *machismo*.

The Marine Corps, as this anecdote attests, still sells itself not as a place to work, but as a place to be. Institutional, not occupational, attributes are its forte. It offers the immutable values of the Corps as its reward—honor, courage, commitment—values little taught or even respected in much of civilian society. Slackers and hackers of Generation X that make it through tough and uncompromising training tend to

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perform admirably in the force. I went into battle with many of them in Desert Storm (my tank gunner painted several grunge-rock symbols on the turret) and they were magnificent under fire.

The problem today is not some inherent weakness or lack of spine in America's teenagers (although the baggy pants have got to make you wonder). Every generation has thought the one following couldn't possibly undertake the military deeds that it had performed, and the idea that the Nintendo generation will not fight just doesn't hold water. As military writer Ralph Peters has put it, "I went to basic training in 1976 with a bunch of losers (me included): drug addicts, thugs, and drunks. I'll take Generation X any day."

The problem is that the military ethos that transforms a Bart Simpson into an Audie Murphy is under assault. Basic training has much less to do with making a technically proficient warrior than it does with effecting a transformation of the recruit's culture and values. An identity is earned in boot camp, not an occupational designation. If political and military leaders do not aggressively defend the need to have values and a culture different and separate from civilian society, then we will lose the ability to transform the citizen into the soldier.

One wonders whether the Marine Corps (and, to be fair, the ever-shrinking combat elements of the other services, whose training is also fair and tough) can hold out against the onslaught of the Listers. Proponents of traditional military culture certainly cannot look inside the Pentagon for allies. The majority of the military, along with the feminists and gender-gap panderers, are obsessed with defending the absurdities of current policy that were identified ad nauseam by the Kassebaum Baker commission. They will continue to bend the military to the values of contemporary society so long as no one puts up too much of a fight. The Pentagon appears trapped in a historical pattern of making sure that if American society is going to slouch towards Gomorrah, it will make sure it is marching right alongside.

If cozy relations between a professional military and its society are our ultimate goal, then we should go ahead and make Parris Island look like Ridgemont High. If, however, we intend to have a military that will provide for the common defense of the nation, then it must be able to fight and win wars. That means producing warriors. And a military that produces them should at least be capable of defending its own culture.

John Hillen is the Olin Fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

GOP Primary Colors

by Matthew Rees

Santa Barbara, Calif.

WHERE ELSE BUT CALIFORNIA would you find such a colorful Republican primary campaign to fill a House seat? The moderate in the race, Brooks Firestone, gave up the family business—Firestone tires—to open a winery. The conservative, Tom Bordonaro, is a quadriplegic who doesn't much care for federal disability laws. Spicing up the mix is a dash of national politics: House speaker Newt Gingrich tried to anoint Firestone the GOP candidate. That set off ripples of protest among some of Gingrich's right-wing colleagues, and conservative interest groups have lined up behind Bordonaro.

The Firestone-Bordonaro contest is being played out on California's sunny central coast in a diverse district that includes Santa Barbara, Vandenberg Air Force base, and a smattering of agricultural towns. Both candidates are state assemblymen, running to fill the House seat vacated by the death of freshman Democratic representative Walter Capps in October. The first round of the open primary is January 13.

Firestone, 61, is a Columbia graduate who eschews partisanship and views public service as a "duty." He's the kind of Republican George Bush was before tacking right in the service of Ronald Reagan. Indeed, Firestone stands as a reminder of what most elected Republicans were like before Goldwaterites and Reaganauts came to dominate the party. The polo fields seem more his turf than the pews.

It was in 1972 that Firestone left the company his grandfather had founded to start his winery. Today, the 500-acre vineyard where he lives registers annual sales of $7 million. He doesn't seem the political type—our interview was conducted at his dining-room table, over fresh pasta and the house wine served by his English wife—and he didn't hold public office until 1994, when he was elected to the state assembly. He was five months into a campaign for lieutenant governor when former president Gerald Ford called shortly after Capps's House seat opened up and admonished him,

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"Brooks, you have a responsibility to do this."

Firestone acceded to Ford's wish but says he didn't know Bordonaro would be running. The two candidates have some things in common—both endorsed Steve Forbes in 1996, and both are supporting a "paycheck protection" initiative giving union members the option of stopping their dues from being used in political campaigns. But their differences are pronounced. Bordonaro, 38, is much more the Reagan Republican. He once had Oliver North in for a fund-raiser, and his campaign is emphasizing tax cuts and IRS reform, opposition to Al Gore-style environmentalism, and Firestone's refusal to endorse Proposition 187, the 1994 California ballot measure that sought to curb illegal immigrants' use of state services.

Bordonaro doesn't talk much about his paralysis—he was in a car accident while a student at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo—but when asked, he says it's taught him "family and faith are what matter" and "reliance on government doesn't do anyone any good." He says he would not have supported the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, which he believes has resulted in too many lawsuits.

THE FIRESTONE-BORDONARO TANGLE HAS BEEN A CIVIL ONE; DESPITE THEIR IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, THE TWO ARE FRIENDS.

For all the candidates' differences, the Firestone-Bordonaro tangle has been civil. The two were friends before the campaign began and haven't engaged in mudslinging (their election-night parties are planned at the same hotel). The worst Bordonaro says about Firestone is that he's a "limousine-liberal Republican." Firestone's televised ads, narrated by family friend John Forsythe, never mention Bordonaro.

But because the contest breaks down along ideological lines, Washington wrangling has entered the equation. Shortly after Capps died, Gingrich and the House GOP campaign committee chairman, Rep. John Linder, called Firestone and urged him to run. That didn't go over well with California conservatives, who noted Firestone is among the three or four most liberal Republicans in the assembly.

Accusations about who did what when have been flying ever since, and the only thing clear is that the Gingrich-Linder effort backfired. Local Republicans resented it, and a group of House conservatives including Steve Largent, John Doolittle, and Dan Burton made their feelings known by endorsing Bordonaro.

Washington's presence is also being felt through independent expenditures on behalf of both candidates. The Campaign for Working Families, Gary Bauer's political action committee, is spending $100,000 on television ads urging voters to support Bordonaro and zinging Firestone for voting against a ban on partial-birth abortion (local network affiliates have refused to run the ads, disingenuously claiming the language used to describe partial-birth abortion was too graphic). And U.S. Term Limits is airing radio spots labeling Bordonaro a "career politician" for refusing to sign the group's pledge to limit his House career to three terms.

Firestone seems to have the early advantage. He possesses a loyal cadre of volunteers and more money (early on, he wrote his campaign a check for $250,000). He also seems more in sync with the district, which has traditionally been represented by people who fit his ideological profile, like Bob Lagomarsino and Michael Huffington. Andrea Seastrand, a conservative, held the seat for only one term before Capps defeated her 1996.

But for all these advantages, local analysts say Bordonaro may be in the driver's seat. Conservatives go to the polls much more reliably than moderates, and in a special election only the most dedicated will turn out (in the 1996 assembly election, turnout was considerably higher in Bordonaro's part of the congressional district than in Firestone's). Moreover, the last time the district saw two Republicans square off in a moderate-conservative contest, the 1994 primary, Seastrand defeated a respected county supervisor by 23 points. And Firestone's money advantage may be neutralized by his refusal to run negative ads.

The wild card is the electoral system: This is the first election held under California's new open-primary law. In the first round, on January 13, voters can pick any candidate regardless of party. If, as expected, no candidate receives 50 percent, the top vote-getter from each party will compete in a March 10 runoff. That's prompted speculation that Democrats will cross over to support Bordonaro, who they believe would be easier to defeat in a general election.

Maybe, maybe not. The Democratic nominee will be Lois Capps, the late congressman's widow. She'll receive some sympathy votes, but that doesn't guarantee she'll win. A number of factors that contributed to her husband's victory—an 18-month, multimillion-dollar independent-ad campaign against Seastrand; a weak Republican presidential candidate—won't be present this time. And history is clearly on the Republicans' side: Before Capps, the district hadn't sent a Democrat to Congress since 1942. ♦

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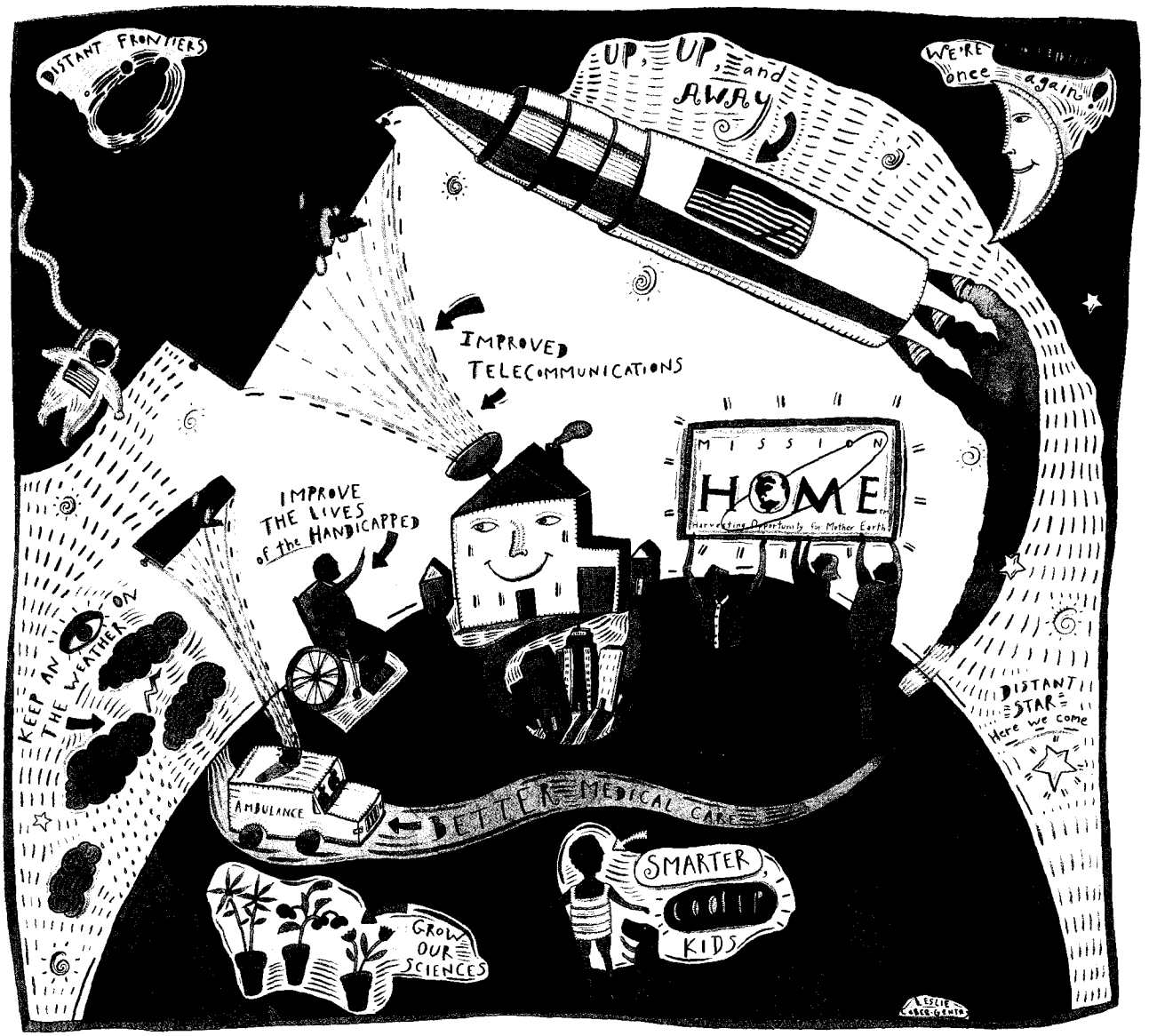

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How Steven Pinker's Mind Works

By Andrew Ferguson

The year 1997 was a big one for Steven Pinker, a professor of psychology at MIT and a celebrated popularizer of science. His most ambitious book so far, *How the Mind Works*, was published to enthusiastic reviews, which is good news for him. And he was accused of advocating infanticide, which is not.

Pinker's pickle, as we may call his current predicament, occurs at the confluence of several recent trends in the life of the American mind, particularly the book-buying public's lusty appetite for popular science and the snazzy allure of "evolutionary psychology," the latest in a long string of disciplines by which scientists have hoped to explain human behavior to humans. *How the Mind Works* is Pinker's attempt to make evolutionary psychology accessible, and palatable.

It is also, as most reviewers have noted, a model of science writing in the popular vein. It is scholarly, as Pinker brings together (what I assume to be) the latest findings in linguistics, cognitive psychology, paleontology, microbiology, anthropology, and other -ologies too numerous to mention. It is widely allusive; Pinker favors references to Woody Allen movies, *Saturday Night Live*, and rock lyrics, but he can pull out Shakespeare and John Donne when he has to. And it offers enough passages of lively prose to keep you reading through the inevitable rough-sledding of technical detail.

With the success of *How the Mind Works*—TV appearances, personality profiles in the slick magazines, and the rest—Pinker inherits the crown of the late king of pop-science writers, Carl Sagan. Pinker is a linguist and Sagan was an astronomer, but the popular work of both has the effect of getting the rest of us to, as it were, cut the crap—get a grip, face the facts, wake up and smell the coffee. Everyone, after all, has the experience of himself as an autonomous self—a soul, even—and most of us have the sense that human beings, as a group, occupy an exalted place in the world. A very large majority of people believe in a supernatural supreme being of one sort or another, and only slightly fewer, according to polls, believe that the materialistic processes of evolution were divinely inspired.

To Sagan these were mere conceits and delusions, and he dispatched them with a relish verging on the unseemly. His final bestseller was called *Pale Blue Dot*—the title itself a reminder that the Earth, rightly understood, is merely a "dim and tiny planet in an undistinguished sector of an obscure spiral arm" of the equally fourth-rate Milky Way. Sagan told his readers that the advance of science was a "series of Great Demotions, downlifting experiences, demonstrations of our apparent insignificance. . . ." Notions to the contrary—such as Kant's commonsensical belief that "without man . . . the whole of creation would be a mere wilderness, a thing in vain, and have not a final end"—were "self-indulgent folly." "A Principle of Mediocrity," Sagan wrote, "seems to apply to all our circumstances." (Stop the Pale Blue Dot, I want to get off.)

PINKER SEEMS A FRIENDLIER FELLOW THAN CARL SAGAN; HE OFFERS MATERIALISM WITH A SMILE AND LOADS OF CHARM.

Pinker seems a friendlier fellow than Sagan, less austere, less inclined to scold, less given to intellectual browbeating; he offers materialism with a smile and loads of charm. He too assumes the inevitable scientific picture of the human being as a "hunk of matter," a very lucky Meat Puppet with a weakness for self-delusion. But Pinker is just as likely to extol the splendor of the scientific view, the magnificence and stunning complexity of the natural world, and to remind us how glorious it is to live in an aimless, random, amoral universe. Sagan was moved to similar rhapsodies on occasion. All science writers have been so disposed since the time of Darwin. The grand old

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man, having buried forever any respectable belief in a Designer of the universe, closed *The Origin of Species* with one of the great whistling-past-the-graveyard perorations in English literature: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers," etc. In other words: Buck up, boys. I can take it, and so can you.

Pinker is similar to Sagan in another respect: As Sagan did beginning in the early '80s, with dire warnings about the arms race and rising defense budgets, Pinker is carefully insinuating himself into cultural matters, armed, as Sagan was, with the clerical status we confer on scientists nowadays. (The real clerics, of course, have given up clerical status.) In fact, the entire field of evolutionary psychology has begun to be embraced by an unlikely ally: political conservatives, now as ever on the prowl for some sanction for their beliefs about how the world works.

This is where Pinker's treatment of infanticide comes in. But we should back up first, and explore this new science of evolutionary psychology and the professor's effort to bring it to the masses.

"Evolutionary psychology," Pinker writes, "is the attempt to understand our mental faculties in light of the evolutionary processes that shaped them." This is a relatively recent job for evolutionists. For years Darwinians, while wildly ambitious elsewhere, steered clear of explaining matters of the spirit—love, sacrifice, art, altruism, religious yearning. In this they followed the master. In 1859 Darwin wrote, "I have nothing to do with the origin of the primary mental powers, anymore than with life itself." When it came to the human species, orthodox Darwinians contented themselves with explaining how natural selection accounts for the design of the eye, or the volutes of the ear. Evolution—or at least evolutionary explanations—stopped at the cranium.

Evolutionary psychologists disdain this sort of humility. The brain, they reason, is an organ showing complex design. Complex design is a result of natural selection. Therefore the brain must have evolved according to the same evolutionary process as did the eye or the ear. (It is one of the many curiosities of Darwinism that the more the world shows signs of design, the more it disproves a Designer of the world.) And so, notwithstanding Darwin's own reticence, the "primary mental powers" are likewise deemed material artifacts, explainable by evolutionary theory. Unhappy skeptics see evolutionary psychology as the final triumph of Darwinian imperialism, overrunning the last redoubts of the spiritual life. With it, materialism can in theory explain life "all the way up and all the way down," in the words of one proponent, from the behavior of cells to a mother's love.

How the Mind Works is only the most recent attempt to popularize evolutionary psychology. It first leaked into the newsmagazines in the mid-1970s, when E.O. Wilson, who studied bugs, introduced the discipline of "sociobiology." (Evolutionary psychology is an adaptation, so to speak, of sociobiology.) In 1994, the journalist Robert Wright brought the field up to date with *Moral Animal*, which became a bestseller. Wright's book was overly glib, as journalistic accounts of science tend to be (ahem). Some critics of evolutionary psychology, notably the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, have dismissed *Moral Animal* as "egregiously simplistic" and in parts "absurd." But Wright conveyed the gist of the enterprise, particularly its immodesty. For evolutionary psychology—like Skinnerian behaviorism before it, like Freudianism before that—is a unified-field theory of human behavior.

"If the theory of natural selection is correct," Wright wrote, "then essentially everything about the human mind should be intelligible in these [Darwinian] terms. The basic ways we feel about each other, the basic kinds of things we think about each other and say to each other, are with us today by virtue of their past contribution to genetic fitness."

"Slowly but unmistakably, a new world view is emerging," Wright went on. "Once truly grasped . . . it can entirely alter one's perception of social reality."

Wright's statement is even truer today. Evolutionary psychology is the hippest field in science. It has lately entered the popular press, in tarted-up form, through stories about the "gay gene," the "fat gene," "the happiness gene," and so on. The field could have no better pamphleteer than Pinker, a 43-year-old "evolutionary pop star," as *Time* called him, who favors European-cut suits and long curly hair; imagine Peter Frampton as an investment banker. Of course his pamphlet is huge—this is what makes it a science book—and its tone is unremittingly cheerful—this is what makes it a popular science book. But for all its lightheartedness, there is a distinct and inevitable element of party-poopery in his view of how the mind works.

Freud was a creature of the 19th century, and so he took for his model of the mind a highly pressurized pneumatic pump, channeling energy efficiently this way and that but ready to blow at any minute. B.F. Skinner, a mid-century man, saw it as a slightly more sophisticated machine, emitting outputs in direct relation to inputs. Pinker is of the '90s. He sees the mind as a computer—or more precisely, a series of advanced computing modules, designed to perform certain

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tasks. Computers today are of course much more subtle and complicated machines than any that Skinner or Freud knew of; Pinker's view of the mind is thus much more complicated than theirs as well.

The mind is a "package of information processing and goal pursuing mechanisms." The package evolved (in what Pinker calls, unromantically, the "primate assembly process") to solve particular problems faced by our hunter-gatherer ancestors as they roamed the savanna millions of years ago. Depth perception allowed us to gauge accurately the threat posed by a nearby predator; sexual jealousy arose as a way of keeping mates and thus ensuring the protection of the young; our sense of disgust armed us against eating unsanitary food. Thanks to natural selection, these survival strategies are now genetically programmed—that is, we are "hard-wired," to use the current cliché, by our genes to behave in certain ways.

Does this sound deterministic? Well, it is. But evolutionary psychologists are not simple determinists; they are complicated determinists. "For 99 percent of human existence, people lived as foragers in small nomadic bands," Pinker writes. "Our brains are adapted to that long-vanished way of life, not to brand-new agricultural and industrial civilizations." Confronted with the new enticements of our new environment, human beings will make choices not explainable by direct reference to survival strategies. The modules may compete with each other, compute the relative merits of various opportunities and desires, and—ping!—turn out someone who chooses to be celibate (which, in evolutionary terms, is about as idiotic a choice as you can make).

This slight complication in the evolutionary scheme should not be interpreted as free will. Evolutionary psychology isn't as crudely reductive as, say, behaviorism was, or early versions of sociobiology. But it's still plenty reductive. Pinker's point is that the mind is not an "emanation" of the brain, as some theorists have it, much less a "self" or a "ghost in the machine," as most people seem to think. The mind is simply a function of the brain; it is what the brain does. And how the brain functions is determined by the genes. "The genes created us, body and mind," Pinker says, quoting the biologist Richard Dawkins. It is axiomatic among Darwinians—you could call it an article of faith—that natural selection has no goal, no end toward which it works. But, writes Pinker, "the ultimate goal the mind was designed to attain is maximizing the number of copies of the genes that created it."

Dawkins coined the term "the selfish gene," and the unsophisticated have taken it to mean that human beings are unremittingly selfish. This is a misapprehension. Pinker amplifies the point nicely. "People don't selfishly spread their genes; genes selfishly spread themselves. They do it by the way they build our brains . . . by making us enjoy life, health, sex, friends, and children." Sometimes building an unselfish Meat Puppet is the best way for the selfish gene to pass itself along. Genes are the new "ghost in the machine."

And so, one by one, the remorseless logic of evolutionary psychology puts paid to our cherished delusions. I bet you thought you liked your kids. "We now understand why many animals, including humans, love their children, parents, grandparents," Pinker writes. These individuals share the same genes, and the genes are manipulating the Meat Puppets to protect the genes. "People helping relatives equals genes helping themselves." When a mother, watching her son enter surgery, wishes she could take his place, "it is not the species or the group or her body that wants her to have that most unselfish emotion," Pinker writes. Much less is it she herself, or the love that consumes her. "It is her selfish genes."

Pinker says this is a "more hopeful way" of envisioning human motivation. But it's hard to see how. The conscience, for example, is for many people the most important faculty of the mind, suggesting an objective and universal moral order to which human beings are somehow tied. In his 660-page book, Pinker dispatches it in a single paragraph.

"H.L. Mencken defined conscience as 'the inner voice which warns us that someone might be looking.' . . . People feel guilty about private transgressions because they may become public; confessing a sin before it is discovered is evidence of sincerity and gives the victim better grounds to maintain the relationship. Shame . . . evokes a public display of contrition, no doubt for the same reason."

Note the "no doubt." It is the purest Pinker. How about the mystery of romantic love? Surely here is something insusceptible to rational explication. After all, the woman you fall in love with, if you're a man, is almost certainly not the prettiest Meat Puppet on the planet, or the richest, or the healthiest—not, in other words, the optimal genetic choice. (That would be Michelle Pfeiffer.) But according to Pinker, the irrationality of your choice is precisely why it is so, um, rational, as an evolutionary matter.

If your choice were purely rational, he explains, "then the object of your desire could predict that, by the law of averages, someone better would come around sooner or later, and that you would dump them like a hot potato. But if it's clear that your choice is

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partly involuntary, partly directed to that unique individual, as opposed to that individual's list of qualities, that gives your partner some assurance that you are committed."

No doubt!

And so on, and so on. How to explain grief, in evolutionary terms? It is "useful only as a deterrent": Take care of your gene-containing kids, because if something happens to them and, God forbid, their genes (which are yours, too), then you'll feel awful. Music? Bach thought he was writing the B Minor Mass to the glory of God. "I suspect music is auditory cheesecake," Pinker says, "an exquisite confection crafted to tickle the sensitive spots of at least six of our mental faculties," including habitat selection and auditory scene analysis. Bach was an ass.

As you read *How the Mind Works*, the reductionism washes over you until . . . suddenly . . . unexpectedly . . . you notice something. We are getting further and further away from the stuff of science—which is to say, from observable fact and testable theory. Different readers will notice this at different points in the book. For me, it came in Pinker's explanation of our sense of natural beauty. Why do we human beings find particular landscapes pleasing?

Steven Pinker

Kent Lemon

Since most of human evolution took place in the African savanna, it is to be expected, from an evolutionary-psychological perspective, that human beings prefer savannas to other environments. And sure enough, says Pinker, they do. A savanna, as you recall from your National Geographic TV specials, is a sweeping grassland relieved here and there by an oasis of trees and shade. We like it because it offers views to the horizon, which allowed our ancestors to spy predators and sources of food, and because it has few impediments to movement and retreat, which allowed Grandma and Grandpa to get the hell out when danger arose.

"In experiments on human habitat preference . . . children prefer savannas, even though they have never been to one." In doing so, suggests Pinker, "they are revealing our species' default habitat preference."

Why of course. Very reasonable. Until, reading along, you realize . . . but . . . this isn't true. Pinker offers no citation for these habitat experiments, so we can't double-check the results. But most kids I know prefer the beach, and the adults I know seem about evenly divided among the beach, the mountains, and woodland retreats. Forgive the anecdotal observation: I don't know anybody who wants a two-week vacation in the savanna, except for a few oddballs seduced by their Banana Republic catalogues.

But Pinker throttles onward. Two other researchers, whose work he does cite, "found another key to natural beauty, which they call mystery. Paths bending around hills, meandering streams . . . and partially blocked views grab our interest by hinting that the land may have important features that could be discovered by further exploration."

So here we are: If you prefer savannas, and everyone does, it's because our ancestors wanted wide open spaces to view approaching predators. If you like rolling hillsides, it's because they offered our ancestors the tantalizing possibility of greater rewards, even though, presumably, rolling hillsides would work to the advantage of predators. Easy to please, these ancestors of ours. But really this evolutionary-psychological explanation explains nothing.

What is it with evolutionary psychologists and the savanna, anyway? The environment of our ancestors, and our understanding of it, is absolutely crucial to the worldview of the evolutionary psychologist. Conventional Darwinians, seeking to explain the physical evolution of organisms, can resort to the fossil record, spotty as it is. But there can be no fossil record for the

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evolution of mental faculties; life on the savanna is invoked as a substitute for it. In a devastating critique in the *New York Review of Books*, Stephen Jay Gould summarized the scientific weaknesses of this approach:

> How can we possibly know in detail what small bands of hunter gatherers did in Africa two million years ago? . . . How can we possibly obtain the key information that would be required to show the validity of adaptive tales about [the stone age environment]: relations of kinship, social structures and sizes of groups, different activities of males and females, the roles of religion, symbolizing, storytelling, and a hundred other central aspects of human life that cannot be traced in fossils? . . . The chief strategy proposed by evolutionary psychologists for identifying adaptation is untestable, and therefore unscientific.

This hole at the center of evolutionary psychology has led to the charge that many of its farther-flung explanations, like those cited above, are mere "cocktail party speculation." Gould's critique provoked a furious backlash. In an unintentionally hilarious exchange in the *NYRB*, Daniel Dennett, a philosopher and a vigorous evangelist for evolutionary psychology, repeated the insinuation that Gould resists the truth because he is—brace yourself—a closet theist. As Dennett has pointed out, in his many writings Gould even sometimes quotes the Bible! Gould responded in high dudgeon. He quotes the Bible only as great literature, Gould asserted, and, furthermore, he thinks the universe is just as aimless and pointless as Dennett does.

A more plausible argument could be made that much of the resistance to evolutionary psychology is political. This was certainly the case with sociobiology, when E.O. Wilson introduced the subject in the politically hyperactive 1970s. Left-wing scientists saw it as a recrudescence of 19th-century Social Darwinism, and a band of radical feminists expressed their reservations by crashing a conference and dumping a pitcher of ice water on Wilson's head. Gould himself, as Dennett points out, is a self-described Marxist, and has been known to criticize other scientists in explicitly political terms.

The left-wingers may have a point, to judge by their political opposites. Political conservatives have lately been drawn to evolutionary psychology, as evidenced by favorable reviews of the field, and its offshoots, in *Commentary* (by Francis Fukuyama), *Forbes ASAP* (by Tom Wolfe), and *National Review* (by John O. McGinnis). It may seem odd that conservatives, best known for terrorizing right-thinking persons by their alliance with Jerry Falwell, the Christian Coalition, and other religious types, should embrace a philosophy so remorselessly materialistic and anti-theological. But the tent gets bigger by the day.

Evolutionary psychology holds a surface attraction for conservatives because it affirms something resembling a universal and intractable human nature. This is anathema to leftists, since it would thwart any political attempt to remake society along utopian lines. And the human nature thus revealed seems compatible with conservative beliefs and prejudices. Women are hard-wired for child-rearing, men for aggression and status-seeking. The family—the old-fashioned family, that is, with Mom and Dad and Buddy and Sis, not Heather and her two mommies—is the fundamental social unit, designed by evolution as the most efficient means for the selfish gene to protect itself; so evolution favors family-friendly tax credits. Because individuals are indelibly self-interested, the market is the most rational allocator of resources. Humans are inclined to deceive others and themselves, so concentrations of governmental power should be avoided.

Of course this prompts a larger question: If natural selection is a Republican process, why did it create so many Democrats? All the more reason, say the evolutionary conservatives, to hurry up and embrace the new, expansive Darwinian worldview.

"Because evolutionary biology provides an informative picture of man and because citizens are rapidly assimilating that image," McGinnis wrote in *NR*, "any political movement that hopes to be successful must come to terms with the second rise of Darwinism."

For the most part Pinker himself avoids political questions in *How the Mind Works*. He does make a point of rejecting the naturalistic fallacy—the argument that whatever happens in nature is good. "Science and morality," he writes "are separate spheres of reasoning. Only by recognizing them as separate can we have them both."

Pinker's method of keeping them separate is instructive. He quotes with apparent approval Dennett's argument that sentience—our experience of ourselves as autonomous selves—is a "cognitive illusion." We are hunks of matter after all, animated by a very smart, genetically programmed computer. This is both the premise and conclusion of evolutionary psychology.

But moral reasoning may proceed, Pinker argues, by pretending otherwise.

"Ethical theory," he writes, "requires idealizations like free, sentient, rational, equivalent agents whose behavior is uncaused, and its conclusions can be sound and useful even though the world, as seen by science, does not really have uncaused events. . . . A human being is simultaneously a machine and a sentient free

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agent, depending on the purpose of the discussion . . ."

Morality, in other words, is based on a pretense—on believing, provisionally, something science tells us is untrue; namely, that human beings are persons and not Meat Puppets. This will strike many people as a rather rickety platform from which to launch the pursuit of right and wrong.

But how rickety? We return at last to Pinker's pickle—specifically his thoughts on the touchy subject of infanticide, as expressed in the *New York Times Magazine*, and the controversy, such as it was, that ensued.

Pinker's article appeared on November 2, and a week later Michael Kelly called attention to it in a column for the *Washington Post*. "The article by Steven Pinker," Kelly wrote, "did not go quite so far as to openly recommend the murder of infants. . . . But close enough, close enough."

Pinker responded in a letter to the editor of the *Post*, calling Kelly's article "grossly irresponsible," and repeating the disclaimers Pinker had inserted in his original piece. "Killing a baby is an immoral act," Pinker had written. "We can try to understand what would lead a mother to kill her newborn, remembering that to understand is not necessarily to forgive."

We should dwell on Pinker's *Times* piece in detail and at some length, for two reasons. First, it is a salutary example of how evolutionary psychology is "done," and how the knowledge it claims to uncover might be applied to the practical world. And second, Pinker's protest notwithstanding, Kelly is right. The nation's preeminent evolutionary psychologist was not openly advocating the murder of infants. But close enough.

Pinker begins his *Times* article with two recent, highly publicized cases of neonaticide: the "prom mom" who gave birth to her baby and left him dead in the bathroom during a high school dance, and the two 18-year-olds who killed their newborn and dropped him in a dumpster outside their Delaware motel. "How could they do it?" Pinker asks. "Even a biologist's cold calculations tell us that nurturing an offspring that carries our genes is the whole point of our existence."

Like most excursions in evolutionary psychology, Pinker's piece is a kind of intellectual ragout—a pinch of ethnographic evidence, a tablespoon of generalizations from the contemporary scene, many assumptions about our savanna-loving ancestors, and large chunks of psychological surmise—served up with the certitude of the scientist. But let the diner beware: When you pick apart the ingredients, you discover they are not what Pinker says they are.

Neonaticide, Pinker writes, "has been practiced and accepted in most cultures throughout history." Practiced, of course; but accepted? To support this startling premise he relies heavily on the work of two evolutionary psychologists, Martin Daly and Margo Wilson. They devoted a large part of their 1988 book *Homicide* to the murder of infants, in hopes of proving their thesis: "Infanticide can be the desperate decision of a rational strategist allocating scarce resources"—in other words, infanticide is not, as commonly understood, an act of depravity, but, under certain circumstances, a rational survival strategy.

They "proved" this thesis with a tenuous string of implausibilities. Conjecture solidifies into fact; the fact then becomes a premise for further conjecture, which

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in turn evolves into another factual premise, and so on. "If we wish to understand human characteristics," Daly and Wilson wrote, "we should study the hunting and gathering life-style in which and for which those characteristics have been shaped by natural selection."

As Gould points out, this in itself is a dubious assertion, but Daly and Wilson stretched it to the point of absurdity. They began with the !Kung San, a tribe of foragers in Africa's Kalahari Desert. One study from the 1980s showed that !Kung San women have babies several years apart, nurse them for as many as four years, and average five births over their reproductive life. The study further reported, for the period of observation, six infanticides in 500 live births, an incidence of 1.2 percent.

NONE OF THE HYPOTHESES FITS THE AMERICAN CASES THAT PINKER SEEKS TO EXPLAIN: THERE ARE NO FOOD SHORTAGES IN DELAWARE.

What may we extrapolate from this? Almost nothing, you might think. But you are not an evolutionary psychologist. From this one study of one small tribe living in the desert (not even the savanna!) in the 1980s—a study that uncovered all of six infanticides—Daly and Wilson believe they know how our maternal ancestors lived a million years ago and the conditions under which they might have killed their babies.

"The general features of a !Kung San woman's reproductive career, . . ." they assert, "are indeed representative of hunter-gatherers and of the life history that characterized *Homo* for thousands of millennia." This is nothing more than a guess, and not even a very scientific one. But conjecture becomes premise, and is then reported as fact by Pinker in the *New York Times*. ("Until very recently in human evolutionary history," Pinker tells his readers, following Daly and Wilson, "mothers nursed their children for two to four years. . . .")

This sort of overreaching continues throughout Daly and Wilson's work, and so in Pinker's article as well. Given the features of motherhood among the !Kung San—which, as we've seen, are now taken to be the "life history" of the entire species—they postulate that mothers will kill their infants for three reasons. First, if the paternity of the child is in question; second, if the child is of "poor quality" and "hence a poor prospect to contribute to parental fitness"; and third, "extrinsic circumstances," like food scarcities or an "overburdening from the demands of older offspring."

How to test this hypothesis? The psychologists knew they couldn't rely on the !Kung San alone. They thus took a "random sample" of ethnographic studies of 60 foraging societies. Only 39 of the studies, it turned out, mentioned infanticide. And only 35 of those described the circumstances that led to the killing; and many of these, further, are "poorly documented."

But Daly and Wilson are undeterred. They found 112 cases of infanticide in their sample of the ethnographic literature. And, remarkably enough, most of these cases fell under one or another of the three circumstances they foresaw. This, they say, confirms their premise: that women, thanks to evolution, have a genetically programmed capacity to kill their babies if it seems like the reasonable thing to do. "Whatever our moral sympathies in the matter," they write, "we should recognize that the rejection of a newborn could be an adaptive (fitness-promoting) parental response."

But alas: Daly and Wilson don't say how many babies were born under such circumstances and yet weren't killed. The point would seem crucial; otherwise we won't know whether infanticide is taken as a rational "survival strategy" within those societies or is deemed an aberration. The ethnographic literature is evidently silent, for Wilson and Daly pass over it. But without an answer, they have proved nothing about the evolutionary history of infanticide.

The implausibilities continue to pile up. In the two American infanticides that Pinker is seeking to explain, none of the three circumstances in the Daly-Wilson hypothesis obtained. For both the "prom mom" and the Delaware couple, there were no questions about paternity. The babies were healthy. There were no older offspring to consider. And there are no food shortages in Delaware.

But the American girls, according to Pinker, were in the grip of "emotions [that], fashioned by the slow hand of natural selection, respond to the signals of the long-vanished tribal environment in which we spent 99 percent of our evolutionary history." Being young and single, they faced futures as mothers that were likely to be rough. The circumstances stirred those old genetic urges, and so they killed the kids. The circularity can get you dizzy.

Pinker understands, however, that to make his argument—that infanticide "has been practiced and accepted in most cultures" because it is ingrained by natural selection—he cannot simply appeal to pre-civilized societies. Here again he invokes Wilson and Daly. "They have shown that the statistics on neonati-

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cide in contemporary North America parallel those in the anthropological literature. The women who sacrifice their offspring tend to be young, poor, unmarried, and socially isolated."

Again the data are weak, the interpretation a mishmash of guesswork and question-begging. What Pinker calls "North America" turns out to be Canada (he himself is Canadian, but even Canadians seldom make this mistake). Daly and Wilson studied Canadian homicide statistics from the 1970s and 1980s, to prove, among other things, that "infanticides in a modern western nation . . . match the pattern" predicted by evolutionary psychology.

The Canadian data revealed little about the circumstances under which infanticide took place—nothing about questionable paternity, or low income levels, or lack of maternal support. Even so Daly and Wilson could report that "infanticidal mothers in Canada are indeed more often unmarried than one would expect by chance."

Here are the numbers: Two million babies were born in Canada between 1977 and 1983. Twelve percent, or 240,000, of these were to single women. There were 64 maternal homicides. Thirty-two of these were committed by unmarried mothers. By an amazing leap, Daly and Wilson take this as support for their belief that difficult life circumstances may trigger a hard-wired capacity for infanticide.

But surely the numbers show the reverse, and they do so quite emphatically. Of the 240,000 single mothers, more than 239,950 did not kill their babies. And the 32 mothers who did were convicted and imprisoned.

But of course! Anyone but an evolutionary psychologist would have predicted as much: Civilized societies do not "accept" infanticide, and it is in fact exceedingly rare. They deem it a moral horror, classify it as a crime, and punish it when it can be proved.

Such common understandings interfere with the gnostic enterprise of evolutionary psychology. Pinker merely sweeps them aside. Having assumed the truth of what Daly-Wilson failed to prove, he surveys contemporary practices, presenting the unlikely as fact. "The emotional response called bonding is far more complex than the popular view," he writes. "A new mother will first coolly assess the infant and her current situation and only in the next few days begin to see it as a unique and wonderful individual."

Can this be? It must be. The scheme of evolutionary psychology demands it. The mother must contain this rational calculator, programmed by her genes to calibrate her survival strategy in light of the arrival of the new burden.

The problem, of course, is that it isn't true, as a quick trip to the maternity ward will show. Steve: Ask your mom. But as with new mothers, so with civilized cultures in general. By tradition, Pinker says, our own societies coolly assess the newborn, too. "Full personhood," he writes, "is often not automatically granted at birth, as we see in our rituals of christening and the Jewish bris." This isn't true either. Steve: Talk to a priest. Talk to a rabbi.

Critics of evolutionary psychology call these Just-So stories: They are true because the evolutionary psychologist asserts them to be true, even though every ordinary person knows them to be false. Just-So stories, dressed up as science, can be harmless enough, and even amusing, as when dopey Bob Arnot struggles on the *Today Show* to explain the existence of, say, the fat gene. But Pinker's exercise in explaining infanticide shows just how sinister Just-So stories can be.

Having explained the evolutionary rationale for infanticide, Pinker moves on to moral philosophy. "So how do you provide grounds for outlawing neonaticide?" he asks. "The facts don't make it easy." Indeed, they force us "to think the unthinkable." As Kelly pointed out, one key to Pinker's project is his reference to the work of Michael Tooley, a philosopher at the University of Colorado. Pinker paraphrases Tooley's views (before pointing out that many people reject them). The reference is to Tooley's 1983 work *Abortion and Infanticide*, which may very well be the creepiest book published since Gutenberg.

This is where you go to find the Pinkerian argument in hard-core form. *Abortion and Infanticide* is a 400-page, dispassionate, philosophically sophisticated, tightly reasoned brief for killing babies.

CIVILIZED SOCIETIES DO NOT "ACCEPT" INFANTICIDE, AND IT IS IN FACT EXCEEDINGLY RARE. THEY DEEM IT A MORAL HORROR AND PUNISH IT.

"There is some reason, then," wrote Tooley in the book's conclusion,

> for thinking that the emergence of at least a limited capacity for thought-episodes [i.e., thinking] may take place at about the age of three months. Therefore . . . there will also be some reason for thinking that humans become quasi-persons at about three months.
>
> The general picture that emerges is as follows. New-born humans are neither persons nor even quasi-persons, and their destruction is in no way intrinsically wrong. At about the age of three months, however, they probably acquire properties that are

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morally significant, and that makes it to some extent intrinsically wrong to destroy them.

In his *Times* article, Pinker did not claim to be making an argument; a forthright case for neonaticide might have raised eyebrows even at the *Times Magazine*. He comes to us as a scientist, lending his expertise to illuminate a confused question of social policy. But his reasoning closely follows Tooley's brief. Both the philosopher and the scientist appeal to the ethnographic record, evolutionary theory, current cultural practices, and a highly technical definition of personhood. And both of them lead us to the same place.

If newborns are to have a right to life, Pinker says, they must possess "morally significant traits that we humans happen to possess." Among these are "a unique sequence of experiences that defines us as individuals"; "an ability to reflect on ourselves"; "to form and savor plans for the future," and so on. Thought-episodes, in Tooley's jargon.

"And here's the rub," Pinker continues, "our immature neonates don't possess these traits any more than mice do." Unlike Tooley, Pinker doesn't have the nerve to complete this syllogism, at least not in a family magazine. Persons have certain traits. Neonates don't possess these traits. Therefore, neonates are not persons. And therefore . . .

Here is Pinker's pickle: Even he seems reluctant in public to follow the logic of evolutionary psychology to its ordained conclusion. Recall Robert Wright's words about the new science: "Once truly grasped . . . it can entirely alter one's perception of social reality." And so it does. For the moment Pinker wants merely to normalize neonaticide—to make us see it not as a moral horror but as a genetically encoded evolutionary adaptation, as unavoidable as depth perception or opposable thumbs.

Needless to say, his view ignores a large swath of human experience. Or is it needless to say, these days? The best short treatment of infanticide was written by the Harvard historian William L. Langer, who got to the heart of the matter. "The willful destruction of newborn babes," he wrote in "Infanticide: A Historical Survey," "has been viewed with abhorrence by Christians from the beginning of their era." And the Christians, Langer noted, were following the Jews, whose Rabbinical Law saw infanticide as straightforward murder. Their logic was quite different from that of the evolutionary psychologist, of course, but just as inexorable. Human beings were persons from the start, endowed with a soul, created by God, and infinitely precious. And this is the common understanding that Steven Pinker—and indeed the new science that he represents with such skill and good cheer—means to undo. ♦

The Benefits of Bankruptcy

By Lawrence B. Lindsey

As Washington confronts the financial crisis in Asia and a deteriorating global economic situation, two policy camps have stepped forward with solutions. Unfortunately, neither the Economic Nationalists of left and right nor the administration and its good-guy internationalists are proposing a sound course. In fact, both camps favor bureaucratic management of the global economy. One calls for legislating capital controls and "fair labor standards" and otherwise throwing regulatory sand in the gears of world markets. The other, ever ready with a bailout, relies on the talented elites at the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and in the U.S. government. No one, it seems, is speaking up for market principles.

In the present discussion, the advantage of principle belongs to the left-labor Democrats and the Buchanan Republicans. They are forthright in deploring the "excesses" of global capitalism and the free movement of financial and physical capital. The administration's position, for its part, has the advan-

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tage of being the official stance of the United States. The theme is "responsible management": Foreign governments whose economies are in trouble will get access to billions of dollars of hard currency, in return for which they will promise to make internal reforms recommended by the IMF and other multilateral agencies. The model for this approach is Mexico.

In 1995, an American cum IMF program arguably prevented the Mexican government from defaulting on its obligations. More than a transfer of cash was involved: The markets inferred that the U.S. Treasury effectively stood behind Mexican government obligations. A major devaluation of the peso allowed the country to earn back through exports the hard currency it had borrowed. Although Mexican living standards took a dive, the international investors who bought Mexican government debt were repaid, and so was the U.S. government. Mexico, therefore, is touted as a "costless" model for buying global financial stability.

BANKS MAKE BAD LOANS. PEOPLE DEFAULT. LOANS THAT WERE ONCE SOUND TURN SOUR. IT HAPPENS IN AMERICA—WHY NOT OVERSEAS?

When it comes to the Asian crisis, however, neither a Mexican-style bailout nor the Economic Nationalists' high-risk program of retreat from the world addresses the problem at its core. Nor is the right course some middle ground between the administration and the anti-globalists. Only markets, with their built-in mechanisms for correcting financial crises, can provide a principled alternative.

A financial crisis should be thought of as a dispute over who will own an economy's productive assets. Resolving the crisis means removing the old owners and finding new ones who can run the productive assets at a profit. If this does not happen quickly enough, then the productive assets fall into disuse, and images from the 1930s of shuttered factories and soup lines begin to be relevant. Markets remove old owners by forcing them into some form of bankruptcy. The backers who lent a failed owner money and who are not getting repaid pull the financial plug, take over the company, and find someone who can run it profitably. The "someone" they find is usually the highest bidder, not necessarily a crony of the ruling party or even a citizen of the country in question.

Bankruptcy always sounds like a hard-hearted option. But it is actually quite merciful to society as a whole because it limits the danger that a financial crisis will turn into an economic crisis. When productive assets are placed on the auction block, they pass from owners who can't operate them successfully to new ones who can. Often, this is simply the result of the new owners' having paid much less for the enterprise than the old owners and therefore having much lower debt-service costs. Sometimes it involves concessions from other stakeholders, including labor. But how much easier it is on everyone—workers, consumers, and the society at large—to have the firm up and running, making payroll, producing goods, and paying taxes, than to have it sitting idle.

To build the bankruptcy option into a workable policy choice in the present crisis will require some persuasion. It is necessary to explain, first, why creditors should not be bailed out, but instead should be forced to take their chances in bankruptcy proceedings. This is fairly easy. Why should American taxpayers be asked to bail out the very firms with which they compete as workers and investors? (Economic nationalists ask this sensible question, which explains part of their appeal.) Banks make bad loans. People default. Economic circumstances change, and loans that once were sound turn sour. It happens in America. Why should things be different overseas?

Consider Texas in 1986. For reasons beyond any Texan's control, the world price of oil fell from roughly $30 per barrel to about $10. Loans in Texas that were premised on $30-per-barrel oil went bad. Assets throughout the state, especially real estate, were put on the auction block. Many sold for a fraction of their original cost. The suppliers of equity lost everything. The suppliers of debt not only received no interest, but lost a good fraction of their principal as well. Every major bank in the state was in trouble. Today, 12 years later, eight of the top ten banks in Texas are owned by what Texans consider "foreigners," people from places like North Carolina and New York.

Nor does the so-called S&L bailout of the early 1990s offer a precedent for an international rescue operation of the kind the administration advocates for Asia. In the S&L crisis, the only people who were bailed out were the depositors in the failed institutions. The assets of the failed savings and loans were put on the auction block. The equity holders generally lost everything, and many large suppliers of debt (other than depositors) took a haircut as well. Why is the administration proposing to treat South Korea and

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Indonesia better than we treated Texans and the owners of S&Ls?

The second step in building the bankruptcy option into a real policy alternative is to point out that the very people to whom we are asked to entrust a bailout failed to foresee the crisis in the first place and have so far handled it ineptly. Consider the IMF. In its annual report on the Korean economy issued this fall, it found no cause for alarm. Instead, it dubbed the Korean economy fundamentally healthy. This is not a record on which U.S. taxpayers should be asked to bet billions of dollars.

WE WOULD GET AT LEAST AS MUCH STABILITY BY FORCING A BANKRUPTCY SALE AS COULD BE EXPECTED FROM A BAILOUT.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration's international economic policy is so lacking in credibility that the president could rally only one fifth of his own party to support his major trade initiative of 1997. That vote of no confidence was for good cause: The country is reaping the rewards of a foreign policy run by focus groups and campaign donors. The administration's handling of the run-up to the Asian financial crisis has been especially shabby, characterized by hubris, denial, and excessive risk-taking.

In June, at the G-7 summit in Denver, the president and top Treasury officials lectured global leaders about the superiority of their handling of the U.S. economy, alienating the Europeans and causing Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to hint darkly about liquidating his nation's U.S. bonds. Then in November at the Vancouver APEC meeting, the president termed the Asian crisis just a small "glitch in the road," generating widespread incredulity in world markets and doubts about the American government's grounding in reality.

Most remarkably, the administration has been conducting a highly confrontational trade policy in the very midst of the crisis. In late September it instituted Super 301 trade sanctions against South Korea, driving another nail into the coffin of an already dying economy. In October, the administration's handling of a relatively minor dispute involving the behavior of the Japanese mafia at the docks in Japanese ports threatened to end oceangoing trade between the world's two largest economies. Whatever the merits of the U.S. case, this was reckless behavior, given what was happening at the time in Asian financial markets.

Even more amazing, the administration is seeking money for an IMF Asian bailout after blocking for a year a Japanese-led effort to have the Asian economies deal with the problem themselves. This proposal, advanced by the Japanese Ministry of Finance, could have accomplished everything the administration is now trying to do in a much timelier fashion and without risking U.S. tax dollars. A senior European central banker told me that the only reason he could find for the U.S. refusal to cooperate was that our Treasury officials wanted to be seen playing a role. Unfortunately, U.S. contributions to a bailout may have as much to do with bureaucratic empire-building as with solving an economic crisis.

The third step toward a principled, market-based response to the Asian situation is to explain why such a policy is in the U.S. national interest. Bailout advocates can always claim they are buying something that benefits the country: international economic stability. What would we get for America by forcing a bankruptcy sale?

First and foremost, we would get at least as much stability as could be expected from a bailout. In the current crisis, debt-holders are not receiving the interest they were promised. They are increasingly skeptical about ever getting their principal back. So they are unwilling to extend new loans to enterprises. Note that last week international banks would extend new loans only if they were guaranteed by the Korean government.

With new loans hard to get, firms can't even meet short-term contingencies like payroll and inventory, much less invest in new plant and equipment. Managers struggle just to make it through the day. They are selling their output at any price they can get and deferring purchases.

This causes the crisis to spread and turn into an economic problem. A failing company's competitors find it hard to compete with the desperation prices at which output is being sold, and the company's suppliers see their own sales start to fall. Some of these competitors and suppliers are American firms. The administration is correct, and the Economic Nationalists are wrong, about whether we can protect ourselves through regulations: We can't. The question is how to stop the credit crunch quickly.

Under the administration's bailout plan, owners and their crony system would stay in place in countries like Korea. While international creditors would

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get their money back, only very foolish ones would make new longterm commitments to the same management that is now on the verge of default. The best way to stop the credit crunch in Asia, end the downward spiral, and allow the economies to revive is to put *new* management in place. As we have seen, that's what the bankruptcy option is all about.

Incidentally, wouldn't it be in the U.S. national interest if American entrepreneurs could buy and run some of the bankrupt companies in Asia? Regardless of who the new owners might be, though, we gain nothing by giving the present owners and the political system that supported them a fresh lease on life.

Defenders of the IMF bailout talk about attaching "conditions" to the loans. But what will the IMF do if the new Korean government fails to honor the conditions to which the old one agreed? Tactically speaking, we would certainly achieve more far-reaching reform of South Korea's economy if we forced a bankruptcy sale than we ever could through IMF negotiations. If the South Korean government refused to allow foreigners to invest or Korean firms to repay their debts, creditors would go to courts in other countries to claim any available assets. The cost for Korea would be a loss of export markets and of access to credit worldwide. The price of competing in the global economy and enjoying its benefits is playing by the rules.

Finally, advocates of a free-market solution must be prepared to counter two of the shibboleths of the administration's position: "systemic contagion" and the "Mexican success story." Systemic contagion is really a respectable way of saying we should worry that large multinational banks and other lenders might lose a bundle. Of course, the real concern is not that the bankers who made these bad loans might have a bad year. Rather, it is that their losses could impair their banks' financial soundness and import the Asian banking crisis to the United States.

In this regard, there are no guarantees. A series of bad policy moves by our government, a failure of regulatory oversight, and a collapse of prudence on the part of U.S. financial institutions could always come together to create a problem. But, on a list of imminent worries, this should rank about ten spaces behind global warming. We Americans have made some very important changes since the early 1990s. First, we have made our banks build their capital positions so as to be able to sustain losses. Taken as a whole, the capital reserves of the U.S. banking system are at record levels. Second, the Federal Reserve and other financial regulators established elaborate and sophisticated models that "stress test" bank portfolios. While these measures are no guarantee that problems will be averted, our banks are far better prepared for major loan losses than are others—notably European and Japanese banks. Our third line of defense is the Federal Reserve's ability to create money. The Fed has real-time on-site supervision authority and can, has, and will step in to provide liquidity should the need arise.

Adequate capital, appropriate regulatory supervision, and an able and willing central bank are the defenses any government has against systemic contagion. The IMF bailout package contains none of these. With regard to preventing systemic contagion, it is, at best, beside the point.

In fact, an IMF bailout will probably make systemic contagion more likely in the long run. The best protection we have against bankers' overextending themselves to imprudent borrowers is the bankers' fear of losing money. If we reinforce the precedent, already estblished in the case of Mexico, that the IMF and the U.S. Treasury will come to the rescue when something goes wrong, we eliminate the bankers' fear.

There is ample evidence that the Mexican bailout prompted the flood of lending to Asia that is now causing trouble there. Outside of Washington, no one takes seriously the story that the Mexican bailout was a success. Investment bankers on Wall Street talk about how they actively promoted loans to Asia once the Mexican rescue was in place. A very senior official in the British Treasury who spoke on condition of anonymity bluntly blames "systemic contagion caused by Mexico" for the Asian problem. Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, who is intimately aware of the consequences of the Mexican experience, spoke in early December of how an IMF bailout could be "worse than useless" because of the precedent it sets. Mexico set us up for Asia. An IMF bailout of Asia *may* postpone the day of reckoning, but it will make it much more severe, and therefore less containable, when it finally occurs.

THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT THE MEXICAN BAILOUT PROMPTED THE FLOOD OF LENDING TO ASIA THAT IS NOW CAUSING TROUBLE THERE.

The bankruptcy option is the opposite of postponing the day of reckoning, and it is clearly in the American national interest. We have shown our system of corporate management to be the best on the planet. To retreat into our shell, as the Economic Nationalists

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urge, would be an especially stupid strategy at a time when economic trends are on our side. It is equally foolish for us to try to cloak our global role in a mantle of multilateralism, meanwhile actually catering to campaign-donor interests and generally behaving, as we have for five years, as though all political economy were local. But to avoid these mistakes—to curb the costly bungling of the administration and stave off the protectionist backlash it is likely to provoke—we must adopt an alternative policy grounded in market principles. Someone—why not the Republican leadership in Congress?—should be making the case for it now. ♦

The Asian Crisis: Made in Japan

By David Smick

It is the moment in the great late-1990s Asian financial meltdown for the inevitable Monday-morning quarterbacking. The stakes could not be higher. Since 1990, the countries of East Asia (excluding Japan) have accounted for half of the growth in world output, despite representing only 20 percent of world GDP. An incredible two thirds of all world capital investment since 1990 has taken place in East Asia. The recent Asian meltdown could rob as much as one percentage point from the growth of the U.S. economy for 1998. Because the Asian economies have seen their currencies weaken dramatically against the dollar in recent months, at least one thing is certain: The new Asian game plan will be to try to export those economies out of the basement—with America the global consumer of last resort. Some analysts are predicting $300 billion U.S. trade deficits in the next year or two.

What is most troubling is that the international community continues to avoid addressing the real issue. The IMF tinkers with stopgap financing schemes for the smaller Asian economies. But the reality is that Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and the rest are a mere sideshow. There is one issue and one alone that must be addressed first: Japan. The Southeast Asian economies cannot truly recover until the Japanese financial system is restructured and the real-estate market revives. To talk about long-term IMF plans for, say, Korea is shortsighted, simply because Japan, the world's second largest economy, is so dominant in the region.

Consider the financial linkages within the region. Because of Japan's ailing banking structure, the Bank of Japan has been forced for years to set official interest rates at close to zero percent. This was an attempt to avoid a general credit crunch and, more important, to provide banks with a steady, government-issued profit stream (borrow for next to nothing and lend at a profit). The unintentional result: huge outflows of Japanese bank lending to Asian economies, creating a dangerous financial bubble of excess capital. It was not long before Japanese bank balance sheets, already bleeding badly from a growing load of nonperforming domestic assets, began hemorrhaging. Some banks now have loan/loss ratios of an incredible 20 to 25 percent on their Thai loans alone.

True, there is blame to go around. The IMF has hardly performed brilliantly in recent years. Its reports gave thumbs-up assessments to both the Thai and Korean financial systems as recently as last year. And what ever happened to that "early warning system" promised after the 1994-95 Mexican bailout?

The Clinton administration shouldn't break out the champagne either. There is the so-called moral-hazard dilemma and the important question: Did the Mexican bailout contribute to the Asian financial bubble? Note that back when the Mexican bailout package was being negotiated, European policymakers privately insisted that the holders of dollar-denominated Mexican public debt—led by many large U.S. investment houses—should suffer at least a minor loss lest a moral-hazard problem arise. The "heartless" Europeans were quickly overruled, but their concern had

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merit. Every fund manager worldwide was tempted to believe that the IMF and the G-7 would forever provide a safety net for large institutional investors, for fear of a risk to the entire international system posed by any failure. The Mexican bailout served as a green light for massive and sometimes foolhardy capital flows to Asia and other developing economies with little transparency. A dangerous precedent to say the least.

IMF officials respond that they have no choice but to chase markets to prevent systemic panic. While true in one sense, this suggests a serious misunderstanding of the issues at hand.

The Thai meltdown this fall, for example, was not started by George Soros and other hedge-fund operators who, as some allege, sucked liquidity out of the system with reckless abandon. The meltdown started when domestic investors with an intimate knowledge of the corruption, inefficiency, and stupidity within the Thai financial system were the first to sell out of their overvalued market positions. The same thing is happening in Japan, where domestic investors have been net sellers of the Nikkei 225 for more than five years. Indeed, after last month's much ballyhooed Hashimoto fiscal plan was announced, the stock market fell through the floor. The reason was that Japanese industrial investors, looking to get out of their cross shareholdings of Japanese bank stocks, sold on every uptick in the market. The result has been a disappointing downward trend.

FOR NOW, JAPAN HAS DECIDED TO PATCH UP THE EXISTING FINANCIAL SYSTEM WITH CHEWING GUM AND CHICKEN WIRE.

These private investors understand what so many in the international policy community miss: that the Asian crisis can never truly be resolved until the Japanese financial system is restructured. Each month the banks domestically lend less and less, creating horribly dangerous credit-crunch conditions for small and medium-sized companies, which today are forced to pay effective interest rates (including fees) of as high as 25 percent to short-term money lenders. As a result, Japanese investment and consumer confidence are plummeting. The yen must be propped up with central-bank intervention schemes, hardly leaving Japan in a position to play a role in reviving the Asian economies.

For Japan, which has ample resources, fixing the system is a political rather than a financial challenge. It is an issue of power. To put it crudely, if Japan were to mount a U.S.-style savings-and-loan-type restructuring that involved large amounts of taxpayer money, the Japanese people would demand accountability. In other words, the entire financial elite, including the banking bureau of the Ministry of Finance and perhaps officials at the Bank of Japan as well, would lose out. In such a restructuring, European and American financial institutions, through joint ventures and takeovers, would almost certainly gain considerable influence in the Japanese financial system.

For now, Japan has decided to take an incremental approach, to patch up the existing system with chewing gum and chicken wire. Remember, restructuring almost always involves retribution. The U.S. S&L experience of the early 1990s saw more than 1,100 S&L executives prosecuted by federal and state authorities and hundreds of institutions closed. Indeed, the situation turned around surprisingly quickly mainly because of Wall Street greed. U.S. government bailout authorities threw S&L assets on the market at bargain-basement prices. Global investors did a U-turn, and investments poured in. The entire U.S. banking industry revived much faster than expected.

To Japanese authorities, the risk of such a rough-and-tumble remedy, which would entail quickly finding the bottom of the real-estate market, is too great at this time. Unfortunately, the incremental approach itself carries significant risk. In 1992, exports to Southeast Asia were roughly 10 percent of Japanese trade. Last year, the figure was between 40 percent and 45 percent. As Southeast Asia weakens, Japan cannot avoid even further weakening; the yen, which is still overvalued against the Asian currencies, will weaken, too.

The danger is that all parties might seek further competitive currency devaluations, the ever-tempting export solution. That would force all eyes onto the 800-pound gorilla that has stayed quiet during the recent crisis—China. If in mid to late 1998 China decides it has no choice but to join in the devaluation game (recent Asian devaluations have made these economies more competitive with the Chinese economy), it'll be Katie bar the door. With the global economy awash in excess capacity, a further flood of Chinese goods could exacerbate already serious deflationary conditions, bringing new bank difficulties and a rapidly rising tide of protectionism. The world will then have a problem indeed, and no amount of IMF bailout money will matter much at all. ♦

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The Nation and Dan'l Webster

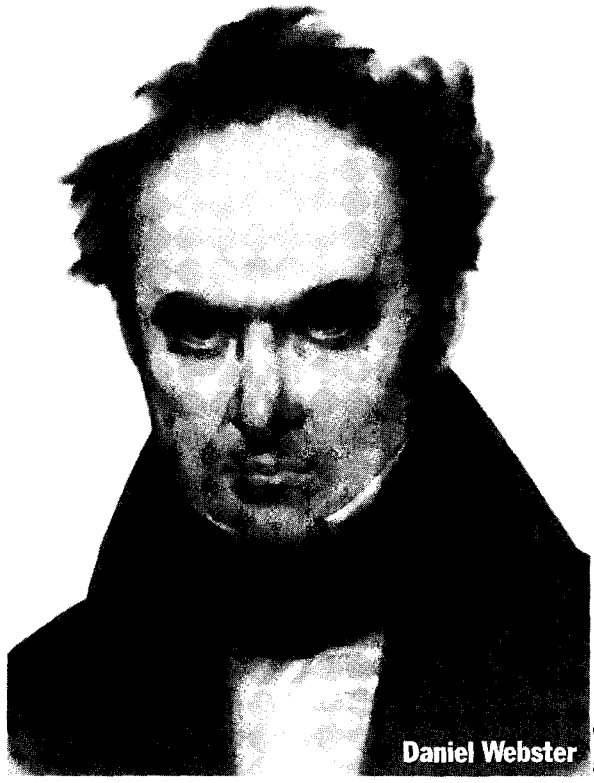
The Great Orator's Giant Intellect and Ravenous Ambition

By Michael Barone

The historian Robert Remini, who has given us volumes on Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and Henry Clay, has now given us a definitive and lively biography of their contemporary, Daniel Webster. Each of the first three figures enjoyed greater political success than Webster, but Webster is the one who may have the best claim to being a national trailblazer. The United States emerged from the Civil War a far different country from what it had been—and Webster was one of those who most insistently pointed the way.

Webster, born in 1782, grew up in the frozen north of New Hampshire, the son of a farmer who put all his savings into sending his boy to Dartmouth College. With total recall and a thirst for history, Webster quickly developed into an orator of searing intensity and scrambled ahead in the law. Soon he was in Portsmouth, suing everyone in sight and collecting good fees, though never quite enough: His luxurious tastes and penchant for bad investments saddled him with debt his entire life.

Before long, he entered politics, winning election to the House in 1812, when he was thirty. A staunch Federalist, he admired George Washington, believed fervently in the Constitution, and preferred Britain to revolutionary and Napoleonic France, convinced that commerce would benefit the farmer and mechanic as well as the money-wise capitalist. In 1816, he transplanted himself to Boston (even while noting that New York was growing faster), where he found plentiful legal business and a supply of rich men willing to supplement his officeholder's salary.



Daniel Webster

Chas Fagan

Webster is today remembered as one of our greatest members of Congress, but he shaped little legislation—certainly far less than Clay. He did not found a political party, as both Clay and Van Buren did. Nor was he a political philosopher in the class of, for instance, John C. Calhoun. And, as we all know, he never became president. (He ran once, in 1836, as one of several Whigs trying to maximize the party's vote against the Democrat Van Buren, and carried only Massachusetts. Four years later, he turned down a chance to be the Whig vice-presidential nominee. Had he accepted, he would have succeeded William Henry Harrison as president a scant month after Harrison was sworn in.)

Rather, Webster shaped the nation in other ways—first, as a lawyer. He was the earliest of our significant politicians to make his career primarily as a lawyer, thus serving as a prototype for many to come. A favorite advocate of Chief Justice John Marshall and Justice Joseph Story, he argued two-hundred and twenty-three cases before the Supreme Court, and his persuasiveness in several of those cases helped free-market capitalism thrive.

His most famous case involved his alma mater, Dartmouth, in 1819. The New Hampshire legislature had passed a law changing the school's colonial charter, ousting its trustees, and transforming it from a private to a state institution. The aggrieved trustees turned to Webster, who was able to persuade Marshall and the court that the legislature had violated the Constitution's ban on the

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infringement of contracts. As Webster anticipated, the court's decision insulated corporations from government interference and made possible the use of the corporate form, which shielded entrepreneurs from personal liability for corporate debt and encouraged risk-taking.

Webster also argued *McCulloch* v. *Maryland*, in which Marshall ruled that the state of Maryland could not tax a branch of the Bank of the United States. Webster played as large a role as anyone in creating a rule of law that nurtured private enterprise and made possible the enviably successful American economy. (When we hear today that Russia still needs a reliable rule of law to foster its economy, we hear that Russia needs what Webster helped bequeath to America.)

Webster's oratorical power attracted national attention, and visitors streamed to the Supreme Court chamber whenever he left the House or Senate to argue a case. Among his chestnuts: "It is, sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who love it." (This, of course, was the Dartmouth case.) And, in *McCulloch*, "The power to tax is the power to destroy." Webster's rhetoric was more than fustian. He took care to publish and preserve (and slightly clean up) most of his major speeches, and, unlike much nineteenth-century oratory, they read well today.

They have serious intellectual content as well, and here we get to another of his contributions: his role in shaping Americans' views of their own history. Even before he went to the Senate, Webster was renowned for orations commemorating Plymouth Rock and the Battle of Bunker Hill. Webster was an American exceptionalist, with a New England accent; he maintained that the Constitution was a magnificent and unique achievement, always to be cherished, and he stressed the contributions of New England Yankees, from Plymouth Rock to the battles of Lexington and Concord and beyond.

Webster was thus an exponent of strong federal government, and one that would promote New England values (much like the government that took form after the Civil War). He avoided his region's flirtation with secession during the War of 1812 and battled shrewdly against Jackson's and Calhoun's various attempts to unite the South and West against the Northeast. Though he did not live to see it, he was a forebear of the Republican party, which found its greatest strength in New England and among the Yankee diaspora that ran west from upstate New York through the Great Lakes to Iowa and toward California. (In 1820, he predicted that Americans would be on the Pacific in 1850.) In the 1860s, the Republican party prevailed in what might be called the Yankee conquest of North America.

Robert Vincent Remini
Daniel Webster
The Man and His Time
Norton, 796 pp., $39.95

Webster, who died in 1852, dreaded the idea of secession, which occurred despite the Compromise of 1850, which he backed. In many respects, his political career was unsatisfactory. He opposed Jackson's crackpot schemes to destroy the Bank of the United States and to ban paper money. He backed Jackson's assertion of national power over Calhoun's argument that states could nullify federal laws. He failed to stop the annexation of Texas or the Mexican War. And he regarded slavery as an evil, for years opposing its expansion into the territories (though he turned partly around in 1850).

Personally, too, Webster's life was less than gleaming. John Quincy Adams, whose presidential administration Webster had supported, soured on him in later years, writing of "the gigantic intellect, the envious temper, the ravenous ambition, and the rotten heart of Daniel Webster." And Webster suffered misfortunes: His first wife died; his second marriage turned out badly; his two sons were unsuccessful, and both died in battle; all of his daughters predeceased him—in other words, the typical lot of nineteenth-century families. He was almost laughably corrupt as well, asking Nicholas Biddle of the Bank of the United States to "refresh my retainer" and perpetually soliciting additions to his salary.

But for all of his failings and offenses, the legal framework of our capitalist economy and our overview of our national history are not so different from those that Webster spoke for—which is not all bad for a guy who never got to be president. ♦

TOM'S LESS SHARPE

Decline and Fall of England's Funniest Writer

By J. Bottum

Something happens to people as they get older, and to comic writers more than to the rest of us. Some get so crotchety they just can't bear to make it funny anymore, while others seem to lose their grip on what divides the comic from the cruel-hearted, the ribald from the crude. But every humorist—from Aristophanes to Donald Westlake—can't help but get a little thin as time

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goes by. It's not that the old dog forgets his tricks; it's that he gets too sleepy to show them off much any more.

There was a moment, twenty-five years ago, when the British novelist Tom Sharpe was the funniest writer in English. He had his share of tricks, of course—the least forgivable being his weakness for the "Top soil for sale, dirt cheap" kind of puns created by the exhumation of dead metaphors. But they were swallowed up by his strength of comic energy: Fleeing one calamity, his characters invariably fell through the trapdoor into another. In little inevitable steps, small embarrassments escalated into biblical catastrophes.

Now nearly seventy years old, Sharpe has just published *The Midden*, his first novel in eleven years. The man was always a little crotchety. In his most hilarious work, the 1978 drop-to-the-floor-and-howl classic *The Throwback*—for some years out of print, but now reissued by Pan Books—he betrayed a hatred of British culture so capacious it embraced virtually every Englishman since the Napoleonic Wars. And he has always trembled on the edge of crudity: In his best-known work, the 1974 *Porterhouse Blue*, a character (in an attempt to hide the evidence of an inadvertent theft) fills two gross of condoms with gas from his cooking ring and floats them up the chimney—only to demolish half his Cambridge college and blizzard the university with flakes of lubricated latex when he forgets to tell his cleaning woman not to light the fire. But *The Midden* suffers not so much from the novelist's old faults as from a new one: The vim that was his strength has dimmed a little. Sharpe has begun to conserve his strength and bank the fires of comic animation that used to burn on nearly every page.

Born in London in 1928 and educated at Cambridge, Sharpe worked as a teacher and a social worker in South Africa until being deported in 1961. Returning to England, he taught history for the better part of ten years at the sort of red-brick, working-class polytechnic school that he would later use as the setting for *Wilt* (1976), *The Wilt Alternative* (1979), and *Wilt on High* (1984), his trio of novels about a murderously inclined college lecturer.

Though many American humorists have praised him in lavish terms, Sharpe has never attracted a large audience in the United States: A 1989 British movie version of *Wilt* made only $113,000 from its American release. But the success in England of his first two works—*Riotous Assembly* (1971) and *Indecent Exposure*

Tom Sharpe
The Midden
Overlook, 256 pp., $23.95

Tom Sharpe
The Throwback
Pan Books, 222 pp., $7.99

(1973), a pair of satires of everyone in South Africa—allowed him to quit his teaching and devote his time solely to writing. Ten books followed over the next fifteen years, flailing at targets all over England—from groundskeeping in *Blott on the Landscape* (1975) to the upper classes in *Ancestral Vices* (1980) to the Etonian public school in *Vintage Stuff* (1982).

There is a kind of Red Tory in Great Britain who never warmed to Margaret Thatcher and her hordes of middle-class, suburban voters. Over the years, Sharpe has taken his share of pot-shots at these antiquated conservatives for whom the rise of Benjamin Disraeli in 1868 was a sign of the end of Roast Beastly Old England and true-blue conservatism. But even in his mockery, the novelist remains in many ways something of an old-fashioned Tory himself. And his latest satire is an already somewhat dated tirade against Thatcher's England—a harangue from so far to the right that it might have come straight from the wild-eyed socialists and unrepentantly lefty Labour party members who felt Britain slipping away from them in the 1980s.

The Midden opens while "The Great Hen" Thatcher still "squawked self-congratulations over the city" and relates the misadventures of Timothy Bright, the stock-broker scion of a decliningly wealthy family, suddenly offered chances at easy money by the changed climate of Thatcherism. Telling the story of the financial and personal disasters after a scandal at Lloyd's of London, the novel's early pages follow the not-very-bright Bright as he is chased into hiding by outraged mobs of irate drug dealers, policemen, insurance investigators, and great-aunts.

Once gone to ground, however, Bright virtually disappears from the novel, becoming merely the occasion for a titanic struggle between two eccentrics in the north of England. Sir Arnold Gonders is chief constable of Twixt and Tween, a Thatcherite whose lay sermons

> consisted very largely of a series of admonitions which made God sound like the Great Lady herself at her most mercenary. . . . "Our business in the world is to augment the goodness that is God's love with the fruition of free enterprise and to put aside those things which the Welfare State handed us on a plate and thus deprived us of the need to which we must pay homage. That need, dear brothers and sisters in God, is to take care of ourselves as individuals and so save the rest of the community doing it out of the taxpayer's pocket."

His opponent is Miss Marjorie Midden, an aging spinster of the disappearing squirearchical class determined to thwart most of the modern world and possessing, in her own mad way, the real virtues of tradition to which Gonders pays his hypocritical homage.

While Timothy Bright huddles in terror, the pair of new- and old-fan-

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gled conservatives wage their war in the countryside around Miss Marjorie's "Middenhall," an enormous and extremely ugly country house built by the Edwardian "Black" Midden "to prove to the world that he had made a fortune out of cheap native labor and the wholesale use of business practices which, even by the lax standards of the day in Johannesburg, were considered more devious and underhand than was socially acceptable." Converging toward Armageddon at Middenhall are an enormous cast of soon-to-be slaughtered subordinates—including an octogenarian seductrix in a silver cat suit, a class of poor children brought on a country field trip by the Dean of Porterhouse College, a retired and myopic big-game hunter, a police SWAT team (some dressed as sheep), a convention of child-abuse specialists, and a large contingent of prostitutes touring the countryside. The novel ends with the kind of thing Sharpe has always been best at: a disaster that steps from an embarrassing mistake to death, disease, famine, and pestilence—followed by the survivor's calm surveying of the shattered battleground.

The concluding cataclysm in *The Midden* is a little cruder and a little more crotchety than such scenes used to be in Sharpe. It is also thinner—the whole scene sketchier and less focused than it would have been in the 1970s. That's not an unbearable failing for those who have followed the satirist's works for twenty-five years and can fill in from memory the finer strokes. But readers who missed Tom Sharpe all those years ago should start instead with *The Throwback* and discover why his admirers are grateful even for a sleepy wag from the old dog. ♦

HOLY MOTHER RUSSIA

General Alexander Lebed Bares His Soul

By David Aikman

One thing the reader can't fail to learn from this remarkable autobiography by former Russian Major General Alexander Lebed is that military life in the Soviet Union was a school of very hard knocks.

Alexander Lebed
My Life and My Country
Regnery, 250 pp., $29.95

Lebed tells some hard-knock stories from even before he joined the Red Army. At fourteen, he had a broken collarbone so badly set that (rather than live with one arm two inches shorter than the other) he had the bone surgically rebroken and recast: "It was while I was recovering that I decided to be a military aviator—so I'd have to stand the pain," he writes, almost gleefully. "And stand it I did." At sixteen, he broke his nose in a fistfight, and looking back on the incident, he comments, "I was no girl. I knew a man needed to be only slightly better looking than an ape, and that a man's true worth isn't defined by the prettiness of his face."

But once he entered the military, the knocks started in earnest. Denied entry into pilot school, Lebed opted for airborne training. On his first parachute jump he landed on his tailbone, seriously damaging his back and severing tendons in his arm. A few years later, after he injured his hand, his smashed and dislocated fingers were set without anesthetic by a drunken physician whose sense of orthopedic accuracy was apparently acquired by carefully observing the pain he evoked in his patients.

He could dish the knocks out as well as take them. A major in Afghanistan in 1981 and 1982, Lebed found himself commanding troops who seemed to spend much of their spare time, such as it was, beating each other up: "Broken noses, cracked jaws and black eyes became the norm." After ten Soviet soldiers tortured another by rigging his body parts to the electric crank of a field telephone, Lebed lined them up and, one by one, smashed them to the floor with his fists. A few pages before he relates this incident, Lebed declares that "an officer should never let his fists do the talking." And in fact, he tells us, his conscience did bother him a little: "My long-held theories of how to handle men had fallen apart in practice," he says ruefully. But then he adds: "But the next morning, there was not one black eye. The fighting had stopped. I was no longer a softy."

Born in 1950 and an officer cadet in the airborne by age twenty, Lebed is probably the best sort of man we have any right to expect the Soviet military machine to create. Pugnacious, very tough, but imbued apparently with a strong sense of fairness and human dignity, he was popular with his troops (working hard to improve their often desperate living conditions) and he climbed the Soviet officer ladder in the face of wrenching corruption and mismanagement.

But it was only in Afghanistan that the corruption and incompetence finally came to disgust him. "No one ever saw the children of high-ranking Soviet officials in uniform in Afghanistan," he writes, and as for the senior commanders, they

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"were all slippery characters." "Afghanistan can mean anything you like," Lebed writes, "but not shame. It was the politicians who made the decisions: some wise, others less so; some expedient, others not. For the unwise decisions, soldiers paid with their blood."

If "Afghanistan" were replaced by "Vietnam," this anguished reflection on a mismanaged war could have come from scores, perhaps hundreds, of U.S. army officers. But the resemblance ends there, for what Lebed faced in the late 1980s was the collapse of his national government's power at home and the decay of the Kremlin's influence on the peripheries of the Soviet empire. From Tbilisi in 1989 to Baku in 1990, Lebed commanded elite units called in by a desperate politburo in Moscow to suppress almost infinite varieties of ethnic and ideological separatism. In Baku, he coolly drew his pistol in front of an arrogant Azeri city apparatchik who had deliberately turned the electricity off in an Armenian sector of the city. "Can you fly?" Lebed demanded; "If I threw you off the balcony right now, would you fly up or down?" The electricity was swiftly restored.

Rather oddly, Lebed's book omits an account of his role in quelling Romanian ethnic separatism in the predominantly Russian Transdniester area of the Moldovan Republic in 1992. "I would either have to write about it in detail or not write about it at all," he says distantly, claiming deep disappointment at the way the "scoundrels at home" (probable translation: Boris Yeltsin) undermined his generally successful efforts to restore peace and civil confidence to the region, especially to the ethnic Russians living there.

Lebed does, however, give a fascinating and highly detailed account of his role in the tense siege of the Russian White House in August 1991, when Gorbachev was held momentarily under arrest in the Crimea. By Lebed's own acknowledgment, he was ambivalent about the events as they unfolded. Ordered by superior officers to draw up assault plans to take over the Russian parliamentary building that Boris Yeltsin was defiantly using as the resistance headquarters, Lebed swiftly did so. He was, after all, obeying orders. But as the coup began to fall apart, the command to assault the White House was never given, and Lebed, who had met with Yeltsin and spoken charmingly to the anti-coup leaders, became an instant hero to Yeltsin's supporters. But he did not return the affection: It was not "democracy" he had been defending, he told disappointed journalists in his gravelly voice a few days later, it was "common sense."

Alexander Lebed

Chas Fagan

Lebed's contempt for "democrats" rings through his autobiography like a ceaseless bell. Beneath it is a plaintive longing for a return to the days when to be a Russian was to belong to a nation that was feared and respected around the world. He comments pithily on the USSR, "those who do not regret its disintegration have no heart, and those who think it can be restored in its original form have no brains." Then he explains why: "There is something to regret: there is a *big* difference between being a citizen of a Great Power, with many shortcomings, and being the citizen of an emaciated 'developing' country." *My Life and My Country*, his autobiography's title in English, is revealingly different from the original title in Russian: *Za derzhavu obidno*. A paraphrased translation might be: "A feeling of shame for the plight of a great power."

The last three chapters of Lebed's book depart strikingly from the colorful and sometimes witty tale of his rise from cadet to major general in the Soviet army, leaving the surmise that another hand may have written it, albeit with Lebed's approval. The last forty-six pages of the book lash at the various forces he believes responsible for Russia's catastrophic decline: "the legions of nouveaux riches" and the "democratic nomenklatura" (translation: Yeltsin, Anatoly Chubais, and their ilk). "Some say that Western culture is a threat to Russian traditions," Lebed adds, "and I believe that is true." His country, he growls, has become "a refuse pit for low-grade Western art; action movies where thirty or forty people are killed in a variety of ways, or pornography, or other mass-produced, formulaic rubbish on television."

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Lebed insists that he is not against capitalism, only the oligarchs who in Russia have deprived it of "its most attractive side—free competition." If he came to power, he insists, he would not try to restore a unitary, imperial-style state, but he would restore order. "Order does not mean dictatorship, or heavy-handed, arbitrary rule," he insists, simply "strict obedience to the law by all, and I mean *all* citizens." Above all, he says he wants to stop what he considers the continuing destruction of the Russian state and initiate nothing less than a genuine revival of the Russian nation. "I am convinced that sooner or later, with or without help from the West, Russia will revive," he says.

At the top of Lebed's list of what will restore the "national core" are "nationalism and Orthodoxy" (two of the ideological planks that, together with "autocracy," defined the czarist system at its most reactionary). For Lebed, there is an almost mystical connection among the Russian Orthodox Church, the army, and national grandeur. "The Church strengthens the army," he explains, "the army defends the Church. And on this restored spiritual axis—the two forces of great power—we can begin to feel like Russians again."

This presumably is the reason Lebed proposes that Russia, to the accompaniment of church bells around the nation, simultaneously entomb in Red Square Nicholas II (Russia's last czar, murdered by the Bolsheviks) and Lenin (the Bolshevik leader who gave the order for the murder).

Both men, Lebed asserts, "knew earthly glory, honor, and greatness," and the melding of the two parts of Russia's modern historical heritage, Lebed believes, would "restore the link between our present and our past, and the historical succession of generations."

It's too early to say whether this is sincere mystical mumbo-jumbo or merely a canny appeal to the atavistic national yearnings of the humiliated Russian people at the end of a century of suffering and exhaustion. But regardless, public-opinion polls repeatedly show Lebed as the single most popular individual in the entire Russian political landscape. Russian politics in the post-Communist era is notoriously unpredictable, but Lebed is surely right that sooner or later Russia will revive—and to read Lebed's autobiography is to remember that it may not be in a form attractive to those who have grown comfortable with a Russia that is chaotic, shuffling, and no threat. ♦

KORNGOLD'S GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Music's Horatio Alger in Reverse

By Jay Nordlinger

In music, the child prodigy who performs is common enough, but the prodigy who composes—as Mozart and Mendelssohn did, to the wonderment of all Europe—is rare enough to astonish the heavens. Erich Wolfgang Korngold, born at the end of the nineteenth century, was such a child. Before he reached his teens, he was an extravagantly celebrated composer, heralded as the successor to Schumann, Brahms, and Wagner—the capstone of the Romantic tradition. One leading conductor, Arthur Nikisch, wrote, "My God, to think of all the treasures that this genius will give to the world! May the Almighty grant good health to this blessed being. Nothing else is needed." The musicologist Ernest Newman judged that the case of Korngold was "quite without parallel," the only question being, "Will the brain last out to ripe manhood?"

It did not, exactly. Korngold is known today only for a handful of works: an opera aria, a violin concerto, and scattered scores for Hollywood films. He whom Sibelius had once dubbed "music's young eagle" spent his final, feeble years in Los Angeles, trying to convince an orchestra, any orchestra, to program his only symphony. Never building significantly on his early achievements, Korngold died an impressive, inventive composer, but not an immortal—a Bizet, say, rather than a Brahms. His life, one of the most fascinating in music, was ultimately a tragedy, and all the more so because he knew it and felt it keenly.

Brendan G. Carroll
The Last Prodigy
A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold
Amadeus, 420 pp., $34.95

Brendan G. Carroll's new biography of the composer carries the presumptuous title *The Last Prodigy*. (The first biography of Korngold appeared when the subject was only twenty-two, a mark of the hopes that surrounded him.) Carroll has devoted twenty-five years to his book, choosing as his mission the restoration of Korngold's reputation. No musical biography can accomplish this, of course, but Carroll has at least picked the irresistible, old story of great expectations never quite fulfilled. It is the kind of story for

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which, once filmed, Korngold could have effortlessly written the music.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was born in Vienna in 1897 (his middle name a tribute to Mozart). His father, Julius Korngold, was the most powerful music critic in the city, possibly on the entire continent. By the time Erich was seven, he had filled notebook after notebook with the most complex musical sketches. Julius was cautious at first about telling anyone about them, but in 1906, he took his son to Mahler, who, examining a cantata that the boy had written, repeatedly exclaimed, "A genius! A genius!" Mahler recommended that Erich skip traditional musical schooling and study instead with Alexander von Zemlinsky, one of the foremost pedagogues of the day. "No conservatory! No drill!" said Mahler. "He will learn everything he needs to know from Zemlinsky." Later, Zemlinsky recalled that his little charge absorbed his teachings with "uncanny speed," and "I was able to communicate with him as with a musician who had already learned these things."

Young Korngold never composed in the manner of a child. He is responsible for no juvenilia, in the commonly accepted sense of the term. He had a prodigious memory, a capacity for high mathematics, and an easy, almost nonchalant grasp of musical theory. Wrote one dumbfounded critic, "One looks in vain for the traces of youthful uncertainty, for exaggeration and clumsiness." But there was "nothing borrowed, nothing imitated"—only music of "totally original coinage." The conductor Felix von Weingartner gasped, "It seems as if Nature has gathered together all the accomplishments of modern musical language for which others have to struggle step by step and placed them in the cradle of this extraordinary child."

At eleven, Erich composed a ballet-pantomime that caused a sensation at the Vienna Opera. Two years later, he wrote a piano sonata that Artur Schnabel, an acclaimed and thoughtful performer, immediately incorporated into his repertory. The English scholar Edward Dent declared, "We shall have to burn our books on harmony and counterpoint." Richard Strauss as well took note of this "arch-musician," expressing the wish that "so precocious a genius" be able "to follow its normal development." The two were to become mutually valued colleagues, if not fast friends (Julius Korngold's position seldom allowed for this, and, indeed, father and son complicated each other's life enormously).

In the 1920s, however, the young man's star began to dim, as serial, atonal music (such as that composed by Arnold Schoenberg) gained the ascendancy. Korngold, who had once seemed daring and revolutionary, began to seem somewhat quaint—particularly as he dabbled in operetta and other light music, much to the distress of his father, who wanted him to concentrate on higher art. In addition, political trouble, of the ugliest sort, was brewing: Korngold had his first taste of the Nazis in 1922, when a Munich production of his opera *Die tote Stadt* was disrupted by a cadre bearing torches and swastikas. Korngold must have been puzzled by the attack, having only the barest concept of himself as a Jew. (He never set foot in a synagogue and was brought up to revere and emulate everything Germanic.)

In 1934, Korngold received a fateful telegram from the theatrical director Max Reinhardt, asking him to come to Los Angeles to supervise the music for the Warner Brothers version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Korngold accepted, thus ensuring his income but, as Carroll writes, sounding the "death-knell of his reputation as a serious composer." Korngold traveled between California and Europe until late January 1939, days before the Germans annexed Austria, when he received in Vienna another critical telegram, this one urging him back to America for

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The Adventures of Robin Hood, an Errol Flynn vehicle. It was a summons that may have saved his life. His parents managed to escape, too, boarding the last unrestricted train out of Vienna. Other family members, and innumerable friends and colleagues, perished in the gas chambers.

In Hollywood, Korngold was part of a formidable community of German-speaking émigrés that included the novelists Thomas Mann and Franz Werfel, and the composers Franz Waxman, Max Steiner, and his old nemesis Schoenberg. As Carroll points out, the 1939 Los Angeles telephone directory makes for "amazing reading." Even so, Korngold and the rest of them suffered from a degree of cultural starvation, stuck with a cultural milieu in which the hostess Elsa Maxwell could say to Schoenberg at a party, "Come along, Arnold, and give us a tune." (It was, to be sure, preferable to dying.)

Why did Korngold turn to films? There was, naturally, the matter of money; he received few royalties from Europe, his works having been banned in Germany, for example, since 1933. Also, his wife, Luzi, observed that he was glum and distracted, "almost as if he had made a vow not to write anymore until Hitler was defeated."

But perhaps most important, he found the movies a hospitable outlet for his talents, his knack for theatrical composition undeniable. He invented the "symphonic film score" and is widely imitated even today. He was the first to compose in the projection room, watching the film unfold before him and scribbling the accompaniment. "It is not true," he once said, emphatically, "that the cinema places a restraint on musical expression." His scores for *The Sea Hawk*, *Anthony Adverse*, and *Kings Row* stand on their own, quite apart from the images for which they were composed.

Nonetheless, the feeling persisted that Korngold—in whom so many hopes had been invested—was wasting his time: Surely this was a man destined for greater things than accepting "Best Original Score" Oscars from Jerome Kern at the Biltmore Hotel. His disconsolate father hectored him incessantly to return to more lasting composition. When the war was over, Korngold confided to an interviewer, "Fifty is very old for a child prodigy. I feel I have to make a decision now if I don't want to be a Hollywood composer for the rest of my life."

He indeed made a decision to reject further film offers and to aim for the pantheon of the masters. To this end, he composed his violin concerto (which employs several of his movie themes) and his lone symphony. He never fully regained his form, however, dying melancholy and wistful in 1957, aged sixty. His elder son remarked that Korngold's had been a "tale of Horatio Alger in reverse, with a brilliant beginning and an unsatisfying ending." The musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky described Korngold as "the very last breath of the Romantic spirit in Vienna." A black flag hung from the Vienna Opera House ("Too late," grumbled Mrs. Korngold). A memorial concert was organized in Los Angeles—ironically, in Arnold Schoenberg Hall.

Brendan Carroll has produced a valuable book. He gives us the lost world of old Vienna, as Korngold and his circle skip from salon to salon, from soirée to soirée. He tracks down elderly survivors of the period, including a woman, interviewed when she was one hundred and five, who tutored the young Korngold in French. The images of a rich, varied life hurry by: Korngold, terrified, in the back seat of George Szell's car as the conductor whips around Berlin; Korngold and Jascha Heifetz glued to a television set in Hollywood, astounded at professional wrestling.

Korngold is in no danger of oblivion. He is remembered and esteemed by many, and there are even signs of a Korngold resurgence (as witness a few recent recordings). But he had held out the promise of infinitely more, and that—no matter how interesting and gifted a character he was—is his tragedy. ♦

UPPER DECK, LOWER DECK

A Classy Titanic *Makes It to Port*

By John Podhoretz

There's something sinful about the fact that you can now buy advance tickets for movies over the phone. It's not just the sin of profligacy (here in New York, it costs an extra $1.50 per ticket). It's the aristocratic mien you unconsciously assume when you waltz right by the mobs of people who are waiting on line in the cold, saunter up to a machine in the warm and well-lit lobby, dip your credit card in the slot, and—with the service the European nobility expects as a condition of birth—are immediately presented with your tickets.

The whole process interferes with a few of the pleasures of moviegoing: the feeling of spontaneity that comes with a last-minute decision to go a theater, for instance, and the experience of commonality with other audience members after you've waited patiently alongside them. But given

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the long lines and endless wait to get in to see *Titanic*—the most expensive movie ever made and the most favorably reviewed movie of the Christmas season—playing the advance-ticket aristocrat seemed the best bet. And it proved appropriate for an old-fashioned populist epic pitting bad rich people against saintly poor people.

There are a hundred things wrong with *Titanic*. The dialogue is wooden and anachronistic, the humor is forced and heavy, and most of the acting is terrible. The movie's male lead, Leonardo DiCaprio, is supposed to be a dashing romantic hero, but with his high-pitched voice and girlish features, he comes across as a little boy running around a big boat. But these flaws can't take away from the movie's magnificence. *Titanic* cost more than $200 million—possibly much more—and every single dollar is on the screen. Writer-director James Cameron has pulled off a feat of moviemaking that, for sheer head-shaking craftsmanship, deserves comparison with the ground-breaking accomplishment of the silent-film director D. W. Griffith.

Griffith invented or perfected most of the cinematic techniques that transformed the cinema from a kind of magic trick into a storytelling medium. With *Titanic*, Cameron has brought the special-effects era (now twenty years old, as the movies were when Griffith made *The Birth of a Nation*) to full maturity. He uses special effects not to create new worlds, but to allow us to visit our own world as it once was. He has deployed every conceivable form of cinematic trickery—from newfangled devices like computer-generated images to old-time ones like miniatures. But the trickery is entirely in the service of heightened realism: the recreation of a real-life event that is so vivid and so meticulous that one is transported back to the year 1912 and to the deck of the Royal Mail Ship *Titanic*.

The movie is masterfully conceived as simultaneously the story of the *Titanic*'s sinking and the salvation of a vibrant human life from the wreckage. It begins in the present day, as a salvage crew led by Bill Paxton takes a submarine two and a half miles below the surface of the North Atlantic to the great ship's wreck. We see footage Cameron himself shot that is nothing short of staggering. A safe is recovered, brought to the surface, and, with the whole world watching, opened to reveal . . . nothing but a notebook of drawings. One of the drawings is of a woman, nude save for a jewelled necklace—the very necklace, it turns out, that Paxton and Co. are looking for.

The drawing is of a *Titanic* survivor whose name never turned up in any account of the wreck—and the last person to see the necklace. Now a hundred and one, she flies out to the site and recounts her story, and as she speaks, the movie goes back in time with her to the luxury liner that unwittingly became (and remains) the most potent symbol of man's hubris in the modern age.

This fifteen-minute opening sequence is a brilliant stroke, because it allows Cameron to establish the ship as a wreck and explain to us in very plain terms the sequence of events on the night *Titanic* sank. Two hours later, when the ship's demise occurs, we know precisely what is happening (which spares Cameron the necessity of going through it during his exciting and tragic depiction of the disaster).

The movie's plot is an *Upstairs Downstairs* romance between a poor artist named Jack (DiCaprio) who is traveling in steerage, and a penniless aristocrat named Rose (Kate Winslet) who is the fiancée of one of the richest men aboard. Though it seems hokey, that turns out to be a virtue—Cameron uses the class difference to show off the entire ship from top to bottom without turning his film into a standard-issue disaster movie (you know, the kind in which seventeen people from different walks of life are shown coping with a calamity). Jack and Rose attend boring parties in first class and lively dances with hoi polloi below decks. And Cameron sets it up so that Jack and Rose have to journey the length and breadth of the ship during the sinking.

It is not an exaggeration to say that there has never been anything on screen like the ninety minutes during which the *Titanic* goes down—exciting, terrifying, saddening, moving. Kate Winslet, who played the reckless younger sister in *Sense and Sensibility* last year, gives a star-making performance as the plucky and resourceful Rose. It is rare that a movie of this kind should have a woman as its central figure—a woman of sensibility and passion who has resigned herself to a soul-killing life of privilege with her nasty fiancé and snobbish mother before she encounters the free-spirited Jack.

Their delirious romance would seem ridiculous were it not for the fact that Cameron betrays no cynicism about it. It takes a goopy romantic to make this kind of goopy romanticism work, and though Cameron is the most advanced filmmaker in the world, at heart he is as much a sentimentalist as Griffith ever was. (This is a man who made a movie called *Terminator 2*, the heartfelt message of which is that if an android can learn to love a boy, then there is hope for us all.)

Most of all, Cameron is a romantic about the possibilities of the movies. Like an Ayn Rand protagonist run amok, he keeps making films that cost ungodly amounts of money and present unbelievable physical and technical challenges—and he surmounts them. Some of this is just sheer talent at work: Cameron is a stunning visual stylist, and there are scores of indelible images in *Titanic*, just as there are in *Terminator 2* and *The Abyss*. But he is also a dogged craftsman in the best sense of the term—someone who masters technique without coming to believe that technique is all. For in the end, *Titanic* is not a movie about a ship. It is a movie about a woman. ♦

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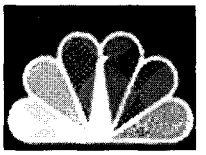
California bans smoking in bars and cocktail lounges, effective Jan. 1, 1998.
—*News item*

Parody



NIGHTLY NEWS

And now, the NBC Nightly News for August 17, 1998, with Tom Brokaw:

BROKAW: Santa Monica is ablaze tonight, with stores burned and looted and neighborhoods in ruins. It all looks horribly familiar and yet tragically different. Our Gwen Ifill is on the scene. Gwen?

IFILL: Tom, the riots started late this afternoon, at the Tom Arnold trial. As all the world knows by now, Arnold was arrested in February for smoking a cigarette in a cocktail lounge, a crime that carries a mandatory death penalty under California's new One Puff and You're Out law. But a jury of 12 men and women brought in from the San Fernando Valley acquitted Arnold today.

Tom, when news of the acquittal was broadcast on the local NPR affiliate, KCRW, enraged anti-smoking activists streamed out of their homes in Laurel Canyon, Coldwater Canyon, and the Hollywood Hills and rampaged down to the beach communities. On the drive down, many did not retract their sunroofs in a show of rage and indignation.

Tom, the angry mobs immediately set fire to several juice bars and organic food stores. "We were careful not to torch anything that might produce huge carbon dioxide emissions," one furious protester said. Thousands of screaming non-smokers smashed coffee-shop windows and could be seen carting off massive piles of biscotti. Tenants-rights groups began passing out bottled water to prevent dehydration among the rioters, and health experts designed on-the-spot Loot-ercise programs that allowed body-conscious rampagers to destroy neighborhoods and burn fat simultaneously.

Tom, the Santa Monica City Council announced immediately that the jury's ruling would not deter it from building on this year's smoking ban. The council plans to ban dessert at restaurants and buttered popcorn at movie theaters. Meanwhile, Ted Turner and Jane Fonda announced that they will release a smokeless version of *Casablanca* to comfort all those West Siders who feel dehumanized by the jury's decision.

Tom, the reaction in Watts was one of sorrow more than anger. "I remember when you could walk down Rodeo Drive without being afraid for your life," one woman said. "But ever since this anti-smoking thing began, it's become more like a Hobbesian state of nature up there." This afternoon, O.J. Simpson released a statement saying that he accepted the jury's verdict that it was not Tom Arnold who was smoking in that cocktail lounge. Simpson declared that he would spend the rest of his life trying to track down the real smoker. Back to you, Tom.

BROKAW: Thanks, Gwen. For updates on this story, turn to our weak-sister station, MSNBC, with its second-rate anchor

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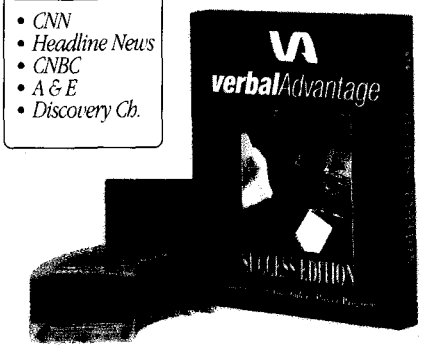

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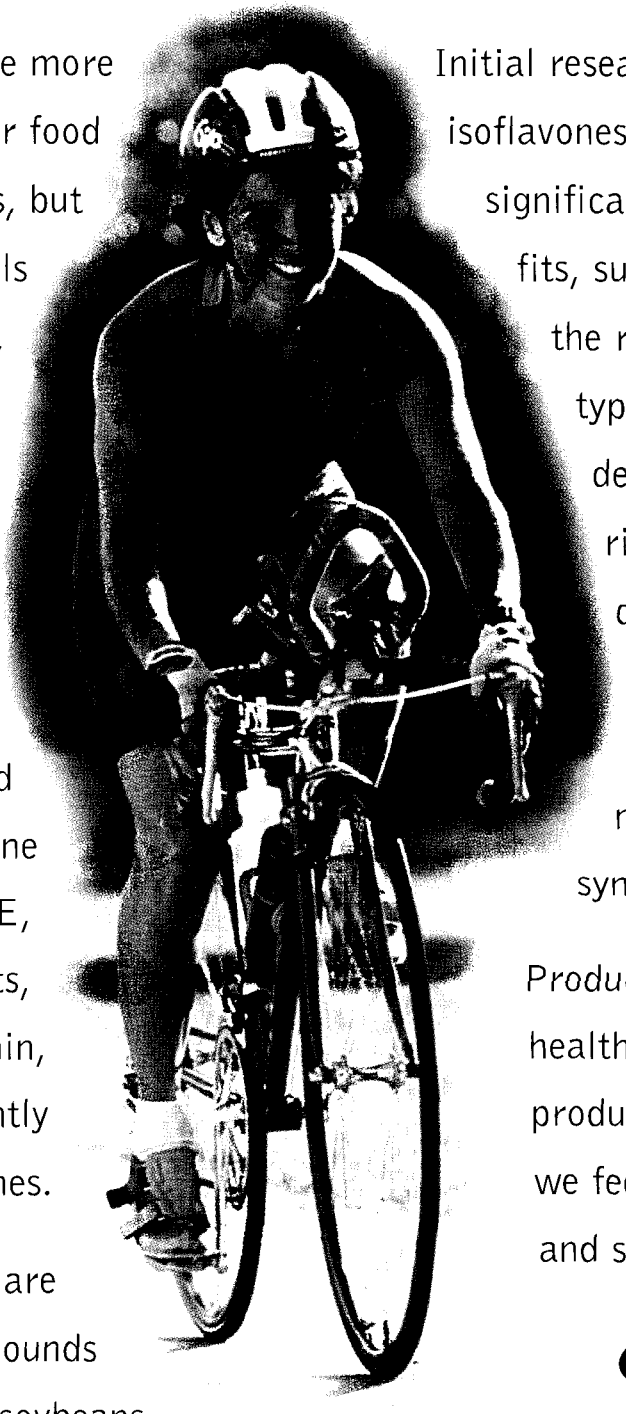

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